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IN TENT AND BUNGALOW

BY

AN IDLE EXILE

Author of "Indian Idyls," "In the Mutiny Days," "By a Himalayan Lake," etc.

MAR 5 1892
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IN TENT AND BUNGALOW.

Too Clever by Half;

OR, A MAUVAIS QUART D'HEURE ON AN ELEPHANT.

FOUNDED ON FACT.

HE somehow looked rather different to the elephant of my childish days, associated with the fearful joy of a jolting along the gravel walk at the Zoo, or the wild excitement of the yearly advent of the wild beast show into the market place. Perhaps it was his surroundings. As I stood and gazed up at him, he seemed framed in a setting of delicate green bamboo jungle, with a patch of sun-baked earth for the foreground, and a

great, towering, dark bunch of the Himalayas for the distance. He did not appear to object to my admiring scrutiny, for he looked at me knowingly out of the corner of his little eye, the while toying with his trunk with a piece of sugar-cane, a kind of a dessert his *mahout* was proffering him. He had previously partaken of an excellent meal of great flat *chuppatties*—cakes of flour and clarified butter.

"He's a fine old chap, isn't he?" said Bob's voice behind me. "You should only have seen him two months ago, when he was *bobbery* (vicious). We had to chain him to a tree in the compound, and he shook it in his rage! He burst the ropes—we had to chain him!"

I regarded Rajah—that was the elephant's name—with increased respect, and involuntarily increased the distance between myself and him as I inquired:

"He's quite good again now, is he?"

"Quiet as a lamb!" was Bob's expressive, if inappropriate, metaphor. "But we can always manage the Rajah, even when he *is bobbery*.

He's mortally afraid of horses—don't know why, but he is. We collected all we could, and rode round him, forming a circle, and gradually closing upon him, and he was regularly quailed. The *mahouts* got the chains on him in a twinkling!" and Bob called to a native to bring him a piece of burning wood from the camp fire, and lit a cigar, the man holding the red-hot ember the while between his horny fingers.

Bob is my elder brother. Bob has been an officer in the Indian Forest Department since I was a boy in petticoats. I am a subaltern in the Twenty-Oneth now, but never did I feel more of a *griff*, or Bob more of an elder brother, than that morning as I stood in the middle of his camp admiring his elephants.

Bob had kindly offered me, in my innocence and inexperience of the country, a few days tiger shooting in his district. Bob appeared to be the arbitrary ruler over a country as large as an English county. True, his subjects are not many in number, for that strip of the Terai, lying between the Himalayas and the plains—

a marshy, jungly land, seamed with rocky ravines, and traversed by refractory rivers that will *not* adhere to their beds—is malarious to a degree. At certain times of the year even the natives flee with their cattle to the lower Himalayas, and Bob betakes himself to Simla. In the cold weather, however, Bob makes royal progresses through his domain, followed by a vast retinue of servants and campfollowers, investigating the condition of these precious forests, on whose existence much of the rainfall so necessary to this parched land of India depends.

It is a solitary existence, for Bob does not meet another European for weeks together; but it has its bright side. Bob is a gamekeeper on a vast scale. All the beasts of the forest are his. Globe-trotting princelets and peers, who are being shown India, are given a few days shooting in Bob's district, as a *bonne-bouche*. The Terai is one vast game preserve, from the Suwaliks to Nepaul. No wonder all my brother officers in the Twenty Oneth were green with envy when I told them of Bob's invitation.

I was much impressed with Bob's imposing surroundings — his white tents, so luxurious within, and two sets of them, one always sent on ahead to be ready for him at the end, or rather the middle, of his day's march, for the ground was got over in the cool hours; the troops of obsequious headmen of the villages, to whom Bob's nod was law; his horses and ponies of many kinds; his elaborate repasts of four courses, all cooked in a little iron stove in the open air, by an idiotic-looking old man in a white petticoat, who sat crooning over his cooking pots; and, lastly, but certainly not least, by his elephants.

There were ten of them, and a civil engineer in camp not far off, engaged — and not for the first time — in trying to bridge one of the refractory rivers, had joined forces with him for a big shoot, when the gladsome intelligence was brought to us two days before that a cow had been killed near a neighboring village, and a tiger's pads tracked down a pond hard by.

I was in real luck, Bob said, yet at that moment I hardly realized it.

To begin with, strange though it may appear, it was intensely cold—so cold that my fingers felt numb under my ulster, so cold that one could almost fancy that the far, far away snow peaks, which had gleamed all rosy in the sunset of the evening before, beyond the dark mass towering above us, had somehow stalked close upon us during the darkness of the night. For it was still very early.

It was dark when the bearer had aroused me with the cup of tea without which no European appears able to open his eyes in India, and, even now, the dawn was dim; and Rajah and his companions drawn up in battle array, a *mahout* squatting behind the ears of each, appeared of huge proportions in the doubtful light.

Then my mind was exercised about two things. The first had to do with the fact that though I had an excellent seat in the bamboo-cart with the fast-trotting country-bred I had set up—we of the Twenty-Oneth are emphatically a foot regiment—"grabbies," they of the Bengal Light Bouncable Cavalry call us—I was not at all sure that I could ride an ele-

phant. My childish experiences at the Zoo, afore alluded to, did not assist me. As far as my memory served me, my nurse sat by me and held my hand on those occasions, and she was not here to do so now. Then the wherewithal to ride the elephants appeared doubtful. On some of them, as the cherub said to Saint Cecilia when she asked them to sit down, "*il n'y a pas de quoi.*" I was secretly perturbed lest Bob should order me to maintain a precarious existence squatting on the pads some of the great beasts carry—kinds of mattresses. They swayed and jolted in those old Zoo days on the gravel walk. Heaven only knew what they would do when we went across country, and such country—ravines, rivers !

However, my mind was set at rest.

"Will you ride on the Rajah with Blake ?" ordered Bob, and went off to the other elephant himself. Blake is Bob's assistant, and has not been much longer in India than myself. The other sportsmen are the civil engineer and his "boss," who has come to see how the bridge is getting on.

My mind was set at rest, for, on his back, behind the *mahout*, the Rajah carried a howdah, a kind of square basket.

I craned my neck upward. The Rajah did not appear to carry a ladder, like his representative in the Regent Park, and I failed to see how on earth I was to mount him.

But upon a little reminder from his *mahout*—a playful prod into his pachydermous with an iron spike—he sank to the ground, a mighty mass, kneeling on his fore and hind legs.

Hind legs, did I say? An elephant has none! It is strange, but true. Notice it the next time you behold the monsters tricycling round the arena at Barnum's, or performing on the big drum. An elephant's legs are all *fore*, all four of them!

The Rajah meant well, no doubt, but he still towered above me, so high that I yet failed to see how I was to attain to that howdah where I fain would be.

Blake solved the difficulty—Blake, coming hurriedly out of his tent, late as usual. Blake never *will* get up when he's called, though I be-

lieve he pays his bearer extra to shake him, in consideration of the kick's and objurgations the wretched menial receives in his attempt.

An elephant is certainly a very versatile beast, a complete compendium of useful and necessary articles. The old riddle about his being the only animal prepared to go into the ark when the flood came, because his trunk was ready, falls short of the mark. He carries on himself the means of mounting him.

In a twinkling Blake had made a neat crook at the end of the beast's tail, by twisting it up, and a native held it as you might hold a stirrup. Blake, putting his foot into it, hauled himself up by the rest of the caudal appendage, and ensconced himself in the howdah. I followed suit, and just in time, ere the Rajah is seized with an uncontrollable desire to whisk his tail about.

I found myself some twelve feet above mother earth, and, as the howdah is like a very narrow pew in church, I have a preliminary struggle with my legs, which seem to be too long to be conveniently stowed. There are two seats, one behind the

other. Blake has taken the back seat. I give him credit for a wish to treat me as the honored guest. Later on I discover his real motive.

Here I may as well mention what a conceited kind of chap Blake is, and the airs he gives himself about his superior knowledge of India, because he landed in Bombay a few months before I did. After dinner last night, while our seniors were discussing the delinquencies of this runaway river, Blake took to making disparaging inuendoes about the army. I replied by implying that Forest officers, in the junior grades, were nothing more nor less than nursery gardeners on a large scale. Blake did not seem to see it.

When we were settled in the howdah, the Rajàh raised himself. A pitch forward, a pitch backward, and then, as he began to shamble after the rest of the procession, a pitch all ways at once. Happily I am a good sailor. But even had I been otherwise, the dangers of the deep—I mean the country—were enough to make one forget everything else. We stalked through the jungle, crashing under branches, fording

marshy streams, with fern-clothed banks, about which the Rajah seemed dubious, for he sounded them with trunk and foot ere he mounted them. My respect for him increased immensely, especially as, with the exception of a very occasional word or prod from the *mahout*, he seemed to require no driving.

It grew suddenly daylight, as it does in India where the twilight is so short, while we were thus reaching our shooting ground. The long purple line of mountains came out clear, and behind them the snow range in immaculate whiteness, soon to be clouded again till sunset by the haze of heat. All around the fresh green of the forest and the luxuriant undergrowth was refreshing indeed to eyes weary of the sun-baked, mud-colored plains.

In a clearing in the forest we came to a sudden halt, at a patch of tall white elephant grass about half a mile square. To each far corner at the end of this went the two "stop" elephants, carrying the engineer "boss" and Bob, while we others formed line with the other

pad elephants and an army of coolies, to beat down the jungle.

The excitement now became intense. We were on the extreme left of the line, and parallel to us, as far as we could see, the giant white grass waved like an angry sea, with every now and then a white sun-helmet or a twisting black trunk appearing on its surface. From under Rajah's very feet game of all sorts broke covert unheeded. The scream of pea-fowl, or the whirling of black partridge, broke the still morning air, and deer of every kind rustled away through the grass.

I forgot all about my cramped legs, I felt as if I were part and parcel of the Rajah himself, as with my nerves strained to the uttermost I leant anxiously over the howdah, my rifle at the cock. Blake and I hardly dared to breathe.

Suddenly the former gave the lowest possible "hist" of warning, and pointed with a finger. On our left, on the edge of the jungle, the grass was waving slowly, as from a mass creeping below. There was an opening in the bushes, and for the

minutest portion of a moment, we saw a patch of color flash through it—no form actually, but a kind of tawny glow. It disappeared, the grass closed over the spot, and our eyes involuntarily sought the edge of the jungle.

Then two shots rang out sharp and clear into the still morning air, and our hearts gave a great bound. There was a few minutes' silence of suspense, and then arose a mighty wah-wah-ing of the coolie host.

Hastily we turned the Rajah out into the open. Toward the upper end of the jungle we found a shouting crowd and empty howdahs, while Bob and his companion were afoot, kneeling on the grass, triumphantly measuring the kill. For a kill it was—the great striped beast was stretched stiff and stark. The natives raised it up on to a pad elephant, and it was conveyed back to camp.

Next we discovered the sun was getting hot, and were nothing loth to drink to Bob's health in the sparkling whisky and soda produced from his howdah, our hearts jubilant. I am sure Blake and I felt as proud

and exultant as if we had shot the tiger ourselves. As it was, we said to each other that we *had* seen him, though only a glimpse, and we should know better next time what to look for.

But we were yearning for something to slay. The country was alive with game, and, after the interval for refreshment, we began to beat again—a strip of thick undergrowth this time, interspersed here and there with tall forest trees. Everything was fish that came to our net—spotted deer, hog deer, a solitary sanbre deer, as large as an English red-deer, pea-fowl, partridge, quail, even wild boars. There was an incessant fusillade all down the line. I do not quite know how much or how little I shot, but I was so excited that I blazed away a great deal of powder, but not so much as Blake, I am sure.

I now found out why he had taken the back seat, for I was positively deafened by the discharge of his rifle in my ear.

Just as we were getting into our shooting, and felt sure we had both of us knocked down something, we

grew aware that the Rajah's movements were becoming erratic. I do not know what it was—perhaps the sight of the dead tiger had disturbed his equanimity, but he seemed put out about something. His *mahout* spoke to him in terms of endearment, appealing to his better feelings, and calling him "Maharajah," "his son," "his father," "his mother."

We gave up trying to shoot, and adjured the *mahout* to steer the great beast steadily. The former then tried a little coercion. But the more he prodded the less manageable did the elephant seem to become.

We were swayed about more and more, the great black trunk whisking viciously in front. The pace grew decidedly quicker. It was necessary to cling on to the howdah to avoid being thrown out. We dashed under trees, had narrow shaves from big branches, and Blake's helmet was whisked off.

We shouted at the *mahout*, and the *mahout* shouted at the Rajah. It was no question of coaxing him now. The man was fast losing his nerve, as natives often do in emergencies, and was calling the elephant every

manner of approbrious epithet. He was "the ghost of his grandmother," "the son of the breath of a fowl," etc., etc.

Not that the Rajah cared one little, tiny bit. He went crashing through the forest at a pace we should never have given him credit for.

It was with a deep sense of relief, and of thankfulness that our heads were still on our shoulders, that we found the Rajah now left the jungle, and evidently intended crossing an open strip on the river bank.

"The river *must* stop him!" shouted Blake.

I made no reply. I felt utterly helpless. It was like being run away with by a railway engine gone mad. Also I kept all my breath for holding on with.

The Rajah dashed through a patch of elephant grass, across some sand, down toward the river, now in its laziest mood, and meandering sluggishly along in the middle of a waste of sand, which it would cover again next rains.

The question that came uttermost in my mind was now, "Would he roll?"

I remembered something of a tendency of horses to do that in streams at home. Should the Rajah be seized with the same impulse, the howdah would be crushed to matchwood, and we to a jelly. But we were powerless in the Rajah's hands, or, rather, on his back. "After all, these beasts are not really tame," I said to myself, remembering the stories one reads of the catching of elephants, which are never bred in confinement, but enticed out of their native jungles and starved into submission.

However, the stream seemed to have no terrors for the Rajah. Perhaps he was so wise that he knew how low it was now, and fordable for him at any part; for, with a wave of his trunk, he dashed into the lead-colored water.

He made a few steps, and then suddenly listed over, like a ship struck on a rock. He struggled, plunged, splashed frantically, while we held on with our eyelids.

"What on earth's up?" I gasped.

"He's sinking; he can't stand;

but yet it's quite shallow," I heard Blake mutter behind me.

The elephant's hind-quarters seemed slowly to sink under Blake, and the truth flashed into my mind.

"It's a quicksand!" I exclaimed.

"Of course—these rivers are full of them; what *is* to be done?" gasped Blake.

The Rajah himself, too, seemed to have realized the gravity of the situation. He made another mighty effort to extricate his huge limbs, and to find a surer foothold. But the more he struggled the deeper he sank. His left front foot had followed the fate of his hind feet. He did not seem to be able to make it out at all. For he waved his trunk wildly in the air, as if to clutch at some support, and turned his head about with a wild look in his wicked little eye.

Suddenly (he *was* a knowing one) an idea seemed to strike him. The long, writhing, black trunk came curling round over his head, and, hey! presto! in a twinkling the *mahout's* turban was whisked off his head.

The next moment the elephant had

popped it into the water, and had used it as a stepping-stone, while the terrified owner gave a howl of dismay, and slithered from the animal's neck along the side of the howdah to a safe position in the rear, calling upon various of his million deities to protect him from this "*shaitan*."

Of course, the turban was useless, and the Rajah found himself sinking again. Another struggle, another frantic splashing, only to end in yet further submersion! And then that evil trunk came swooping round again, guided by the beast's marvelous instinct for self-preservation.

"Get back, get back, for God's sake!" shouted Blake, "or the beast will have you off in a minute!"

But I needed no telling. Once again I envied Blake his back seat, as I hastily followed the *mahout's* example.

The next moment the elephant had seized my cartridge bag, hanging on the side of the howdah, and had stamped it and its contents into pulp in his vain struggle. Then he swooped back for something else.

Blake swung out of the howdah, and there we all three hung, three

helpless, pitiable objects, on the back of the struggling beast. Below, the remorseless quicksand yawning for us; above, the trunk darting in despair to minister to the huge, ponderous feet.

"*Puckerega! puckerega!*" ("He will seize! he will seize!") howled the terror-stricken native, and, much as we respected the Rajah's perspicacity, we gave his keeper credit for knowing the full extent of his powers, and I for one gave myself up for lost.

It was an awful time, and seemed ages, though probably it was not many minutes, ere we heard a British shout ring from the jungle.

I turned my head as much as I dared, for I kept my eye closely on the Rajah's movements, and saw Bob tearing down to the strip of elephant grass, followed by a lot of the coolies.

"Hang on! hang on!" he yelled; "and mind he doesn't get hold of you."

Then they all disappeared into the gigantic grass, and were hidden.

Had they deserted us, after all? Could not they help us? Alas! how

can one get ropes out in the jungle? I reflected. We should all have been sucked in, or crushed to pulp, ere they could be fetched from camp.

As if divining my despair, the Rajah lifted up his voice and trumpetted in a blood-curdling manner, while his hind-quarters sank so deep that we could scarcely remain on his back at all.

The next moment I heard voices behind once more, and a huge bundle of elephant grass was thrown into the water by some half-dozen coolies.

The noble beast (for, on the spot, I forgave him instantly his murderous intentions) clutched at it as a drowning man clutches at a straw, only to more purpose. He settled it cleverly under the fast-sinking left foot, and then seized another bundle they threw. This gave him a stepping-stone for a hind leg, and he gained it with a struggle. A few more bundles, a few more struggles, and he stood an *terra firma*, and we were saved.

I may say I was never so glad in my life to find *my* feet on *terra firma* as when I descended with alacrity from the Rajah's back.

We had each, Blake and I, a stiff *peg* from Bob's soda-water basket, and then the latter suggested we had had enough shooting for that morning. We acquiesced willingly, and everybody turned toward camp and breakfast. Blake and I were only too delighted to mount one of the despised pad-elephants, and the Rajah was sent to the rear in disgrace. But I think his nerves had had a shock, too, for he was very docile as the procession wound its way back to camp, under the now almost vertical rays of the sun.

In the cool of the evening we had a beat on foot after quail and partridge, and such small deer, and made good bags. Somehow or other I found it easier to shoot on my own legs than off an elephant, and I fancy I gave vent to some *griffish* remark about preferring to stalk tigers on foot, which the older sportsmen jeered at, during the jovial dinner-hour in the cosy mess-tent.

Ere we turned in, we went out to have a look at our morning's prize. His striped and tawny hide was lying in the moonlight, stretched out taut, preparatory to being rubbed with

wood ashes. Bob had taken care of the claws and whiskers, as the natives are apt to carry them off as charms. We measured him once more, it was such pleasant work.

"Nine feet and a half! Very fair, indeed!" quoth Bob.

Close by the elephants stood in line, munching dry grass. I went to say good-night to the Rajah, just to show there was no ill-feeling. He looked gigantic in the moonlight, and the sight of his huge foot, as he stamped occasionally, made me shudder when I recollected how narrow an escape I had had that morning from finding myself underneath it.

Chased at a Paper Chase.

"I DON'T think he means business!"

"And the other does?"

The speakers were two pretty women, clad, one in a light tweed, and the other in a white drill habit, such as are the most workmanlike wear when the hot weather is coming on in India.

The last speaker, Mabel Ashmere, sat dejectedly on the side of a little camp bed in a huge white-washed Indian bedroom, twisting a note in her slim fingers, and sighed as she spoke.

"I wish I knew what to do," she added.

"Think of your new stepmother,"

said her companion, standing in front of the looking-glass, and taking off her large white pith hat and its wrapping of gauze veil.

"I know—I always am thinking of her," responded Mabel more gloomily. "It isn't only that she's such bad form——"

"And has so disgracefully hooked your poor father——"

"Or that everyone seems to have some story against her, in every station in the country——"

"Or that she hates you, and is jealous of you——"

"It's just all that put together!" ejaculated Mabel, flicking the dust off her riding boot, for it was getting very dusty now—the end of February. "I wish I knew what to do!"

"And I wish I knew what to advise," responded Mrs. Murray. "I have heard that if you love one man and like another, after five years of marriage you arrive at the same state of affection with either—doesn't last you know. But then I'm not speaking from personal experience," she added, with a little smile.

"But I don't like Mr. Cramwell!" objected Mabel.

"And you do love Captain Carleton!" laughed Mrs. Murray. "But I must go. I see the ayah bringing in baby and Bunny from their walk. It's getting late; Bob will be back from parade directly. I must go and interview the *khansamah* about dinner. Don't forget to answer that note."

No fear. The little sheet of paper lay like a lump of lead on Mabel's mind. Yet it was worded innocently enough:

DEAR MISS ASHMERE:

Of course you are coming to the paper chase this afternoon. The meet is at the Iron Bridge. May I call for you at 3.30 and drive you down in my trap? Yours very sincerely, LESLIE CRAMWELL.

India is the land of notes, though singing birds are never heard there. But of a dirty paper currency, and of endless *chit*, or letters, flying about from one house to the other, owing to the servant's inability to deliver a message correctly, there is no end. Mabel felt much hung upon the *chit* in her hand now. For the hundredth time she went over the whole affair in her mind.

"I don't know how men propose, out of novels! Yet I'm sure, I can't help being sure, that Captain Carleton was very near it that evening in the veranda at the Artillery dance. His eyes told me so," she said to herself, a faint flush spreading over her cheek, somewhat delicate-looking, thanks to the Indian climate.

"But why did he stop short, then?" she argued from the other side. "He didn't mean anything. He never did. He was only flirting!" And the color faded away, and left her face paler than before.

"And this man, this Cramwell, this 'competition wallah,' undrilled, yellow, unsmart? You know very well you can't keep him in hand another moment, if you find yourself alone with him!" she went on to herself. "He will want an answer. What are you going to do? Go back to your father—to find that woman installed in your mother's place? I'd sooner become a Zenana missionaress!" exclaimed Miss Ashmere out loud, tossing her pith helmet and her gloves across the room.

At that moment the hideous face

of the ayah peeped in through the *portière*.

"The sahib has returned; breakfast is making ready; will not your highness change your dress?"

An hour or so later one of Major Murray's servants received a note, bearing Mabel's monogram, with injunctions to deliver it to the "stunt sahib" (otherwise assistant-magistrate) down in the Civil Lines. It was a very meek little note, but it meant a good deal.

DEAR MR. CRAMWELL:

Thank you very much. I will be ready at 3.30. Yours sincerely,

MABEL ASHMERE.

Thrusting the fateful scrap of paper into the folds of his turban for better security, and drawing his white cotton jacket over his bare shoulders, and putting his feet into curved-toed slippers, Mohun arose leisurely from the corner of his special horse's stall, where he was discussing a hookah, and, possibly, further peculations in forage, with a fellow groom, and sallied out down the white, glary, dusty road.

It was English mail morning. The paper of the day before had announced to all Northern India that the weekly mail steamer had been signalled off Bombay, and a special train had shot out the Dustypore bag that morning. The various regimental orderlies had been down to the post office, and were returning to their respective barracks with their spoil.

Captain Carleton had finished breakfast at the mess, and returned to tub and dress in mufti at his own bungalow across the road. It was an off day ; no more duty ; he could at once attire himself in the check cotton coat and breeches, and the yellow leather boots, which form the correct riding costume at that season, and so avoid another dressing till dinner-time. Much changing of clothes is a weariness to the flesh with the British officer in India, but an inevitable one.

His *khitmutghar*, or table servant, received his master's budget of letters from the mess sergeant, and carried them over to the bungalow. He found Carleton in his bath-room, enjoying a warm bath in a huge cut

down cask, while the peripatetic barber officiated upon his chin and cheeks.

"At last!" he ejaculated with a sigh of satisfaction as he glanced through his letters, and after making several bad shots at some containing bills and dunning letters, tore open that which he was seeking. This was how it ran :

My Dear Boy : Your letter has taken me very much by surprise, though I don't know why it should. You are old enough to know your own mind and what you are about. The photo you send is a very sweet-looking one, though, of course, we could have wished you had chosen some girl we know, and should have liked a little money. However, you may be sure that your mother and myself wish only for your own happiness. I think you have acted very straightforwardly in not entangling yourself till you knew what I would do for you. Things are very tight now. I have had to reduce the rents 20 per cent. again this Lady Day. I think you ought to try and manage on £200 a year in addition to what I allow you already, at all events while the regiment is in India, and you are getting good pay. Your mother and sisters, who are much excited, are writing you reams, so I will only say God bless you! From your affectionate father,

JOSEPH CARLETON.

"Good old dad!" mentally ejaculated the son. "I knew he'd come down like a brick. And now to try my luck this very afternoon!"

At 4 P. M. the rays of the sun still poured down with a good deal of fervor upon the heads of the crowd collected at the Iron Bridge. The lunatics, in the *pogel khana* or fools' house across the road, grinned out from behind the wooden cages in which they were confined, on the unwonted excitement. Poor wretches! The only break in their monotonous life was the daily advent of their friends with their food, for Government in India does not maintain the idiots. Slow, creaking bullock carts, heavily laden, and proceeding citywards, drew aside into the dust, for a heterogeneous mass of dogcarts, bamboo traps, buggies, and mail phaetons crowded in the road. All Dustypore was gathered at the meet, ere it went for its afternoon drive up and down the Mall. Every regiment in the garrison was represented, and of civilians there were not a few. There was a great descending from vehicles, and ascending of quadrupeds.

Cramwell in his bamboo dogcart. Mabel Ashmere at his side, drove up late. The groom, who had been squatting in the netting behind, sprang out to hold the horse, but ere he got down himself, Cramwell turned to his companion.

"Won't you give me one word?" he asked, pathetically.

Mabel's face turned a shade paler as she turned away her head and murmured incoherently.

"Mr. Cramwell—you've taken me by surprise—and—this is no time——"

"I will ride home with you when it's all over," he persisted. "Give me your answer then!"

"Now, Miss Ashmere," cried Major Murray, coming up. "I've just put my wife up, and your pony is ready."

Mabel picked her way through the dust to where her mount was waiting. Beside it stood Captain Carleton.

"May I put you up?" he asked.

She hesitated a second, then she turned to the other, who had followed her.

"Oh! Mr. Cramwell, how stupid

of me! I've left my whip in the cart. Do you mind?"

Of course he did, very much, but he dared not say so. On his way back he passed Major Murray, intently engaged on getting on his horse, a matter of on small difficulty. Two grooms were clinging, half frightened, to the head of the animal, a squealing, gray countrybred, blindfolded for the moment by a cloth thrown over his face. Even as it was he was lashing out viciously, and resenting any attempt to mount him. The major, one foot half in the stirrup, was hopping ludicrously about after him, his eye on the beast's heels.

"Hullo!" said Cramwell. "Going to ride Shaitan?"

The gray was well known in Dustypore for his vicious character as a man-eater.

"Got nothing else to-day! Ah! yer would—would yer!" replied the major.

When Cramwell returned with the whip, Mabel was already up, and Carleton arranging her foot in the stirrup.

"I see Major Murray's on that

brute Shaitan," remarked Cramwell, sulkily.

"And will pound us all if he can stick to him," laughed Mabel. "But if they part company he had better make for the nearest tree, or Shaitan will make mincemeat of him!"

"Do you remember how he nabbed a bit out of Mr. Robinson's mess-jacket that night he put him off going round his guards?" Mrs. Murray remarked to Carleton.

"He's a perfect fiend," the latter rejoined, "but a bad 'un to beat!"

Jack Mitford, of the 12th Cuirassiers, was master of the ceremonies as usual. He had laid the paper that morning, and he led them over a pretty stiff course. This was mainly for the edification of Smith and Jones, two newly joined cuirassiers, who were being taught to ride. No one ever quite knew how often they came off that paper chase, but the sun-baked ground was like iron, and they both went tender for days afterward.

The further side of the river beyond the Iron Bridge was all laid out in cantonments before that dreadful May in '57, traces of which,

shattered and shell-ridden, still rise in the lovely gardens between the city and the stream, so that there were plenty of inclosures left, gardens or orchards, fenced in with high banks. Then among the poppy fields there were watercourses handy, and further, mango groves to be ridden through, guava orchards, with low gnarled boughs to be crashed under, and, here and there, Jack Mitford had gone to the expense of a rail or two.

It was one of these that brought Shaitan to grief. He was clever enough as a rule, but he rushed too much for timber. The Indian countrybred does not understand it. Shaitan lit on his head, and Major Murray on his. Both picked themselves up unhurt, and the brute, with a squeal, made straight for Murray, rearing and fighting with his fore-legs. The major hastened to put the rail between them.

Then Cramwell came up on his little stud-bred mare. Till it was too late he was unaware that Shaitan was loose. No one would venture near the animal, even in the stable, except his own particular groom,

and that individual was at that moment reposing in the bazaar two miles off, on his way back to the bungalow.

But the mare popped over the rail, and, in an instant, Shaitan's attention was distracted from his dismounted rider. He went for Cramwell on the mare. Cramwell grasped the situation, and rode for his life. Shaitan followed, squealing fiendishly. He was a bad 'un to beat, as Carleton had justly observed, and he gained on the mare.

A panic seized the field when it was rumored that Shaitan was loose. Those in front pressed forward, and those behind held back, and watched the chase of Cramwell. Among these latter were Mrs. Murray and Mabel Ashmere, Carleton close to them.

Delight is a poor word with which to describe the young lady's feelings, as she watched the chiveying of her lover. She laughed out loud as the horse made plunges at the mare and grabs at her rider's legs, while the latter tried vainly to beat him off with his hunting crop. The climax was reached when the unfortunate

civilian, in terror of Shaitan's teeth and heels, flung himself out of the saddle and sought safety in the dirty mud hut of a native village on the verge of the plain. Here he was lost to sight, and the animals kept up the chase alone.

"Come along, Miss Ashmere," cried Carleton. "We're not in our usual places. Jack Mitford will think we've all broken our necks. Let's hurry up."

They came in at the finish with the ruck, including Smith and Jones; but neither seemed to care much. They rode home together.

After mess that evening Carleton came across to the Murrays' bungalow. Was Mabel expecting him? She was waiting for him in the veranda.

"Reggy," she said with an arch smile, laying her hand on Carleton's arm, "they have brought Shaitan home. Come down to the stables and talk to him; you don't know how much we have to thank him for."

They walked down together through the moonlight, and startled the grooms in the veranda of the stables, sleeping, after the unprin-

cipled manner of their kind, rolled in the spare rugs of their charges.

"Good old Shaitan! Thank you so much; you managed it beautifully."

Perhaps Shaitan understood, for he actually let her stroke the tip of his nose without attempting to bite.



A Pious Fraud.

EVERYONE in the "Royal Regiment" knew Driver Blayre and Gunner Blayre, at least by repute. They were both so exactly alike, this pair of brothers, that those who knew one, meeting the other, forthwith annexed his acquaintance too. Both were good fellows, and good sportsmen. Of the two, Driver Blayre (Ben) was perhaps the the better fellow of the two, and Gunner Blayre (Bob) the smarter and the best rider. Both were neat, dapper, well-groomed men, credits to the corps, whether fate caused them to "fall" to the depths of a garrison battery, or even to a mule or "cow" battery, or bestowed upon them the coveted "jacket," which every

gunner one meets always seems to be just on the verge of getting, or aspiring to in the future. And yet men laugh at women for being fond of frocks !

Driver Blayre, the elder by a year, was less attractive, perhaps, than his brother, though his character was more sterling. At the time when our story opens he was captain of an elephant battery somewhere down in Madras. It was not a brilliant berth, but the Blayres were proverbially hard up. Then, too, he had had a long spell of service at home, which does not suit financially weak constitutions, and Driver Blayre was glad of the extra pay which the elephant battery brought.

Idleminster is a very favorite artillery station. But it means money. The battery is all alone in its glory there, the nearest approach to soldiers being the waifs and strays of the territory depot twenty-five miles off. So the gunners are made much of in county society. The neighborhood is very good round Idleminster ; plenty of large country houses, and, what is more, they are lived in ; plenty of shooting and dancing,

and men are scarce. There is good hunting too, and neither Blayre ever could resist that. So Driver Blayre had hunted a great deal, keeping more horses than he could afford, and raced a little, for he was a light-weight and good rider, and in request. He had a very good time altogether, and, in a way, not entirely connected with horses. Ethel Merrow was the best lady-rider in all Idleshire country—a tall, handsome girl, wretched at home with a stepmother whom she hated, and in her element in the hunting-field. There had been chats at the covert-side, long rides home together in the gathering gloom along the muddy lanes when the day's gallops were over, dances at the Hunt Ball, cozy teas on Sundays at the house of the battery major's wife, after afternoon service at the cathedral, which is a great social function in Idleminster. There had been all this, and some people said more. Rumor ran that Driver Blayre had proposed and had been declined.

The truth of the matter was that he had done no such thing. He was more in love with Ethel Mer-

row than he himself fancied at the time. But circumstances made it out of the question. There had come Jews, duns, and all sorts of money worries, culminating in the *nolens volens* exchange out to India and the elephant battery. Driver Blayre was far too straightforward a fellow to ask a penniless girl to share his heart and his debts. There is more of that sort of thing in the world than meets the eye.

But all this story was three years old now. In the meantime, Gunner Blayre's star was in the ascendant. His "jacket" had fallen to him in pleasant places. The "chestnut" battery at Pugreepore was intensely smart; the polo and pig-sticking in that favorite station without reproach. While his brother moped with his elephants at Guramabad, afar from the world, and little affecting what society there was, Gunner Blayre, a glory of gold lace, became a social and sporting star in the Pugreepore firmament.

But Dame Fortune gave just the wee-est little turn to her wheel, just to show him he was but mortal after all. He had a "crumpler" riding in

the Pugreepore Civil Service Cup. The course was like bricks, and Gunner Blayre broke his collar-bone. He had been over-training a bit, and did not get over the accident quickly. The hot weather came on apace, and down he went with a sharp go of fever. The doctor ordered two months' leave to the hills.

Gunner Blayre betook himself, his bearer, a white terrier, and a couple of polo ponies, to Nynee Tal, to the Mayo Hotel, the bachelors' haunt, on the shores of the lovely lover's lake, which, deep and green, fills up the basin of an extinct volcano some six thousand feet above the sea. The mountain Capua for six summer months of the Lieutenant-Governor and a galaxy of officials, the play-place of military grass widows and subalterns on leave, Nynee Tal, small and remote as it is, is by no means beneath the notice of a certain individual who is commonly credited with finding nefarious employment for idle hands. On Gunner Blayre, smart and interesting through illness, he had his eye. I am not innuendoing the poker at the

club, or the snug baccarat at the Mayo Hotel. I refer to handsome Mrs. Marrinder.

When you are two-and-twenty, with a neat figure, and good-looking, married to an uninteresting, though worthy, old colonel, years older than yourself, when you took, *faute de mieux*, to get away from an uncongenial home, is it to be wondered at if you find the ceaseless round of gayety of an Indian hill-station attractive, and the open devotion of a smart little gunner like Bob Blayre not unpleasing. Mrs. Marrinder and Gunner Blayre became inseparable—one of those couples you meet riding, very close together, down the cart-road in the moonlight, or in secluded spots behind the Rhododendron Hill, in winding mountain paths under the ilex boughs, or where the deodars look out toward the snows. You come across them in cozy nooks in the veranda overhanging the lake, while the band is playing waltzes in the Assembly Rooms within; you run against them "canoodling" on the lake in tiny craft at dusk. For such you reserve seats together at your

dinner-table, such you invite simultaneously to your picnic up Chena, or down to Douglasdale. Only by a judicious assortment of such couples can you make your tableaux or theatricals go off satisfactorily. Of course, it is very wrong, most reprehensible, this "bow-wow" system, a plague-spot in Anglo-Indian society, part of the price we pay for our great dependency. But, at least, it is open and above-board. You see and know the worst. Whereas, in wider, fuller, busier England——

Enter Driver Blayre from the furnace-hell below into the modern Garden of Eden. It was at the sacred hour of gossip, when all the world is in the Assembly Rooms at twilight, pretending to read the English papers after the band has shut up, ere the grooms, tied to the ponies waiting in groups without, have lit up the lanterns to guide the homeward canter. She looked very smart and bewitching in her habit, but the laugh faded from her face, and it got very red, as Gunner Blayre looked up from the *Punch* they

were reading together, and, seeing the Driver enter, introduced—"My brother."

"No need, Bob; we're — old friends, aren't we, Miss Merrow?"

"Mrs. Marrinder," put in the lady, and then it was the Driver's turn to flush.

For the first week or so he bided his time and said nothing; but at last he could stand it no longer. He spoke his mind to the Gunner as he had not done since the long-ago days when they were boys at Harrow. He was no saint, was the Driver; but it was Ethel Merrow whom—yes, he knew now how he had loved her that winter at Idleminster.

The brothers were smoking in the Gunner's rooms at the Mayo, lying far back in leviathan chairs, their legs outstretched on the broad arms intended for that purpose. The Driver, who had made a clean breast of the Idleminster story, and was painfully aware how Mrs. Marrinder had cold-shouldered him during the past week, fully expected his brother to turn round upon him with a sarcastic taunt of sour grapes.

To his astonishment the Gunner tossed away the end of his cigar defiantly, and burst out :

" Look here, old chap, I'm neither a fool nor a blackguard, whatever you may think ! I've carried on before, same as most men, you know. But this is altogether a different matter. I love Ethel Marrinder, and she loves me. Her life with that old fossil is just wretched. She never really cared for him—was forced to marry him by her stepmother—she dreads going back to him. I love her too well not to try and save her from that fate—something must, and shall, be done ! "

The Driver was dumbfounded. He groaned aloud.

" Good God ! Ethel ! That it should be Ethel ! "

Then he added, rising from his chair :

" Well, at all events, you've been frank with me, but I'll respect your confidence. But it seems to me you're in the deuce of a hat. Don't expect *me*, of all men, to help you out of it ! "

The next day he took himself out on a ten days' fishing trip to Beemtal.

He could not bear to see the two about together. But Ethel's face haunted him from the placid green waters of the lake as he lured the wily marseer.

He returned to find Nynee Tal all agog with the excitement of the Lieutenant-Governor's ball that night, and a card for the same awaiting him. As he sat smoking in the club veranda, pondering whether he should go, and feeling, somehow, very old and *blasé*, he saw his brother and Mrs. Marrinder canter past the club windows. Within, some gilded youths, dawdling over a late breakfast and oblivious of his vicinity, made some remarks over the fleeting vision. They are not all fit for publication; but from them Driver Blayre gathered that the lady's husband was expected at Nynee Tal next day, ordered up sick from the plains, and that complications might be expected in the little idyl.

The Driver rose up, gnashing his teeth, and with yet another violent effort to tear Ethel from his memory—Ethel, the worthless, the fallen, the—the—still loved one—he went out for a solitary ride.

For the last half-hour the glimmering lanterns, dotting like fireflies the forest-clad hillsides round the lake, have been converging on to the broad terrace on which Government House is perched. A block of ponies and *jampans* crowd the portico, and a scarlet and gold A.D.C. is presenting the arriving guests to their Honors at the ballroom door. Driver Blayre wanders through the rooms like a restless ghost. "Dance? No, thanks, don't know people! Given it up!" and so on. He catches a glimpse of Ethel Marrinder's white neck and shoulders revolving in the mazes of the waltz in proximity to his brother's closely-cropped fair hair and little mustache. Somehow or other, his thoughts fly back to a certain Hunt ball when he, too, felt her breath upon his cheek. But that seems years ago, and in another world.

He is roused from his reverie by a touch on his arm as he leans against the doorway. A fresh dance is beginning, and bright eyes look up into his.

"I'm *not* going to be cut for my dance, Captain Blayre!" says a fair unknown.

The driver gazes at her bewildered. Then it dawns upon him.

"I beg your pardon—I've not the pleasure. I think you are mistaking me for my brother. I'm Driver Blayre."

The fair unknown subsides into apologies and vanishes. The Driver departs to the peg table to refresh, and then for a cigarette into the veranda.

The silence of the midnight world without, with a moon flooding the folds of mountains with silvery shimmer, and the lake below lying in depths of inky shadow, contrasts with the hum of music and voices within. It is balmy, too, and the Driver paces the terrace slowly, smoking. Only the stamp of a pony's hoof below, where the grooms and the jampan-bearers congregate, breaks the stillness, or the distant bay of a pariah dog in the bazaar. But suddenly he hears voices close by, behind a shrub. Some servants, probably, or—but no, they speak English. The Driver stops short and listens.

"Three o'clock, then, darling, at the corner by the church—it's quiet

there. We shall be safe down at Kaladoongee by daybreak, and *he* cannot be at Raneebagh till breakfast-time! Oh! my darling, to think by to-morrow——"

"Hush, Bob! I heard someone."

"I thought the bushes moved. Come, darling, let's go and have some supper, and then go home and dress; we've a long journey before us."

A white dress and a brilliant uniform flit together across the terrace in the moonlight to the veranda. But Driver Blayre stays rooted to the spot behind the Wellingtonia. How long he stays there he does not know. At last he rouses himself, passing his hand across his face like one waking from a dream.

He goes back to the peg table again. As a rule, there is no more abstemious fellow in the mess than Driver Blayre. But he mixes himself a stiff one. As he drinks it rapidly, a voice calls to him from the doorway.

"I say, Blayre."

"Yes," replies the Driver.

"Oh! beg pardon, thought you were your brother," is the reply.

"The second time in one night," muses the Driver to himself. "Ah! an idea! I'll make it a third. By God, I will!"

Three o'clock strikes on the gong in the Goorkha guardhouse. The ball is nearly over up aloft at Government House; a second supper, select and merry, is about to begin. But, at the corner where the path leads up to the church, all is very quiet, till a jampan, carried at a round trot by four men, with two spare ones jogging in the rear, comes swinging down from the hill above.

As it reaches the corner, a figure on a pony comes out of the shadow of the deodars and rides up to the jampan.

"You are punctual to the moment. Sit well back, the moon is set, and, if we meet anyone, we shall not be recognized."

"Oh, Bob, I feel so nervous!"

"Courage, dearest, courage. All will yet be well."

He reaches a hand into the jampan, and she presses it; but it is icy cold. Then he draws the head man of the jampan aside, while the others are engaged shouldering their bur-

den. Into the coolie's horny palm he presses a handful of rupees, and whispers :

"The Raneebagh road, and as quick as you can go!"

The occupant of the dandy buries herself in a corner under the hood, drawing her shawl over her face, and off they set through the darkness, the pony trotting behind.

Down, down through the night—a narrow path zig-zagging down the mountain-side, through ravines, and round sharp, precipitous corners. On and on, but ever lower and lower. The air grows warmer as they jog along swiftly, the jampan-bearers grunting as they trot, and puffing as they relieve each other, the pony, who has to guide his steps carefully, some little way behind. Occasionally a jackal howls on the hillside, or a *chikaw* partridge clucks startled in the brushwood. In the branches overhead the crickets begin to whirr, for the air gets warmer as they descend—thousands of feet.

Then the dawn breaks. The shadows of the trees and of the shoulders of the hills begin to stand out indistinctly. There comes a

crowing of cocks as they pass native huts. The crisp, cool air of the Himalayas has vanished, and is replaced by the sultry, oppressive atmosphere of the plains in hot weather.

In the veranda of the *dâk-bungalow* at Raneebagh, standing on a little grassy knoll where a wide valley meets the plains, Ethel Marrinder's jampan is set down, and the hood thrown back.

In the gray twilight of the early morning her escort jumps off his pony and advances to assist her to alight. She looks up at him as he bends over her, and falls back with a faint scream.

"Not Bob?"

"No; Ben!" is the answer. The voice sounds strained and harsh.

Ethel covers her face with her hands and moans, "Oh! I am lost! I am lost!"

But a strong arm encircles her and helps her out. The Driver lifts the mat hanging before the door of the nearest room, and, leading her in, places her in a chair. She bows herself and weeps silently. But the Driver turns away and stands looking out at the door, up the valley, from

which, every moment, the mists of daybreak roll away. He dare not look at her, but he speaks.

"Not lost, Ethel. Saved! I, too, love you—I may say it now—have always loved you, and, I think, love you best, for I have saved you from yourself! No, don't speak. I don't ask you to thank me—you probably hate me—but, perhaps, some day, you will. Good-by. My mission is over. I see Colonel Marrinder arriving in a *dâk-gharry*."

He passed out. A man was descending from the vehicle, which had just driven up and stopped at the terminus of the carriage road, a kind of bathing-machine on wheels, drawn by two decrepit ponies at a hand-gallop.

"Good-morning!" said the Driver. "Glad we have just hit it off! I have escorted Mrs. Marrinder down the hill to meet you. No, thank you, I won't stay to breakfast; must be off before it gets hot," and, mounting the fresh pony he had ordered, the Driver disappeared.

It was two years ere the brothers met again, and there had been no communication between them mean-

time. The *Gazette*, however, told the Driver that the Gunner was posted to a field battery at home, and the papers likewise informed him that Colonel Marrinder had died of liver complaint some months after that morning at Raneebagh.

The Driver's spell of Indian service was over also, for the time. The morning after he landed at Portsmouth, as he sat at breakfast at the Junior, he got a letter from the Gunner :

"We are going to be married. Will you make friends and come to the wedding ?—Bob."

But the answer the Gunner got was equally laconic :

"I was never the enemy of either of you. My best, heartiest wishes. But don't ask me to come.—Ben."

But the evening of the wedding-day he received a telegram signed "Ethel Blayre": "Thanks, athousand times thanks."

A Fatal Gift.

MELFORT PRAYTE, the most successful barrister of the High Court of Dustipore, East-by-West Provinces, India, had a very good time of it, when, after many years of arduous toil in pocketing the fees of litigious natives, he ran home on a few months' holiday. It was pleasant to feel his feet once more upon his native strand, exhilarating to find his contemporaries still briefless or struggling. It almost made him forget what the atmosphere of the *cutcherry* at Dustipore was like, at noontide in the merry month of May.

Maidens and their mammas smiled upon Melfort Prayte. The Suez Canal has reversed the order of things

in the Indian marriage market. Men come home for their wives now. They are no longer satisfied with the article imported for Indian consumption, and which no more improves under climatic and social influences than do the tinned provisions in an upcountry Parsee's store.

Being an exceedingly clever young man,—for he was still young,—Melfort Prayte took care not to be at all above laying himself out to loaf and frivol, as occasion demanded. He was particular to remember all the good stories he had heard, and careful to get up the latest society crazes, such as palmistry, graphology, animal magnetism, and so on. Accordingly, when, at the close of a very cheerful season in London, he glanced over his invitations, he found he could easily have mapped out the next six months in staying about in other people's houses.

His time was running short, though, and India was looming unpleasantly near again, when he found himself at Paddington, one October afternoon, on his way down to the Blake-Baskertons' for a week's pheasant-shooting.

The Blake-Baskertons had a big house-party and a big shoot on. Melfort Prayte had dined with them a good deal in town. The eldest daughter, a clever girl, had evinced much interest in India, and was eager for information respecting the silver currency, the future of the ryot and the purdah woman, and such-like light subjects. But Melfort Prayte was home for a holiday. A clever woman is sometimes very interesting to talk to, but she is not always what a clever man seeks in a wife. He wants a rest and a change —from himself.

The women, in tea-gowns, were having tea in the big hall when Prayte drove up. The men had not yet come in from shooting, so, for a while, he was monarch of all he surveyed.

His hostess, after greeting him, handed him over to her daughter at the tea-table, and sank back on to the deep sofa by the fire.

"Will you excuse me, Mr. Prayte, and let Arabella give you some tea? Lady Dehars and I are settling a most important question before the

post goes out in half an hour. I am getting a new cook."

"Indeed," said Prayte, sitting down with his tea-cup on a stool by her side. "What a heap of letters! Can I help you?"

"You clever men think you can do anything," she laughed. "This is a *most* important business. Mr. Blake-Baskerton is *most* particular. Let me see, Lady Dehars; this is that Mrs. Savory's letter, who is so highly recommended, isn't it?"

"May I look at it? I'm something of a judge of handwriting, you know," put in Melfort Prayte.

"It certainly reads very well," he went on, glancing at the highly-glazed paper, with the lines sloping dubiously. "She must be a perfect *cordon bleu*, and her references sound undeniable; but——"

"But what?" asked both ladies at once.

"Only that it strikes me she is lying throughout, and that her honesty is doubtful. Miss Blake-Baskerton, may my long journey entitle me to another cup of tea?"

There was quite a little flutter in the dovecot. Everyone, glad of a

little amusement, produced hand-writings on which they begged Prayte to sit in judgment.

"So very clever! *So* true! Just what she really is, you know," said one.

"Exactly my opinion of him," said another.

"Perfect magic, I declare," said a third. "If he knew her quite well he couldn't have hit off her character better. I always thought she *really* had an awful temper."

And so on, till it was time to go to dress for dinner.

"Good idea having Melfort Prayte down, wasn't it, dear?" shouted Mrs. Blake-Baskerton from her toilet table, after her maid had departed, to her better half, tubbing vigorously after shooting, in his dressing room.

"Yes! Ah! What! Good shot enough, I daresay. But these Indian fellows, with their big game, often turn up their noses——"

"Tut! tut! I didn't mean about the shooting. I meant he'll be such a godsend in the house! The Slumbertons and old Lady Dehars *are* so heavy. And, then, I can quite see he appreciates Arabella; she is

so *really* superior, so intellectual, just the kind of wife for a rising man like him!"

And, overflowing with complacency, Mrs. Blake-Baskerton swept downstairs, just in time to welcome the old vicar and his niece, the only outside guests, and who had trotted up the avenue in goloshes.

Melfort Prayte did his duty bravely at dinner. Even old Lady Dehars laughed over some of his stories. Suddenly he became aware that, whenever he got on the subject of India a very sweet pair of eyes were riveted upon him from across the flowers. Their owner was a girl, so young that she failed to appreciate Mrs. Blake-Baskerton's *menu*, or to attempt to contribute her share to the conversation. Nevertheless, Melfort Prayte said to himself that she was as much of an ornament to the table as the exotics in the Dresden china that adorned the center.

They played games after dinner. Miss Blake-Baskerton monopolized Prayte, and he never got a chance of being introduced to the owner of the eyes.

He came up with her next evening,

however, in a twilight lane, as he was walking home from shooting with the son of the house. The latter began to talk to her, but she turned to Prayte eagerly :

"You were talking about India last night at dinner. Do you know Guramabad ? "

"It is about as far off from Dustipore, where I live, as we are now from Madrid. I never was there," rejoined Prayte.

Her face fell, and the pretty flush died out of it.

"What a dreadfully big country ! I'm sorry ! I wanted to hear about it, for I'm going there next month."

And as the two men walked beside her down the muddy lane, over the fallen leaves, she prattled on naïvely about herself, and of how she was going out to her mother and stepfather. Melfort Prayte drew her out for the pleasure of watching her face sparkle. A little unsophisticated country girl like this was a new sensation to him.

But he did not meet her again during his stay. On off-days from the shooting, Miss Blake-Baskerton

drove him about in her pony-cart, and they talked "subjects."

On Sunday, however, his hostess marshaled her guests to church. It was part of her idea of a country *châtelaine's* duty. Melfort Prayte writhed inwardly over the infliction. Church-going was not much in his line. Civilians get out of the way of it in India. The military men are driven to church in droves with the troops.

But, for many years afterward, that quiet old village church, smelling moldly with the dust of departed squires, the sleepy old vicar mumbling the familiar prayers, and the dim light from the narrow windows falling on the profile of the vicar's niece as she sang in the choir, lingered in his memory like a soothing dream.

At breakfast next morning, just before the dog-cart came round to carry him off to the station, he found his host radiant over a letter his wife had just received.

"My dear fellow, I owe you a debt of gratitude! You have certainly lengthened, if not actually saved, my life!"

"That cook, you know, Mr. Prayte," explained Mrs. Blake-Baskerton. "That Mrs. Savory. My sister has interviewed her for me in town, and taken her character. Well, it appears that her perquisites and her pilfering were beyond anything, and as for her cooking—she knew absolutely nothing!"

"Such an escape! A merciful escape!" added her husband, reverently.

Melfort Prayte got safe away from the Blake-Baskertons, and left Arabella gnashing her teeth. She married the following year a heavy neighbor addicted to shorthorns, and now is of the same mind as the eminent politician who advocates the "Perish India" theory.

Melfort Prayte found his Indian mail awaiting him at his rooms in Duke Street, and realized with a sigh that he must hie him back to work.

Hailing a prowling hansom, he betook himself to the P. & O. office in Cockspur Street, and looked at the sailings of the steamers and the list of passengers:

"SS. *Kidgeree;* for Bombay; Miss Eva Grey."

A vision of the little girl with the sweet eyes flew into his mind.

"Put me down for a port-side berth in the *Kidgeree*," he said to the clerk. "I will go by Brindisi and join it at Suez."

When the overland contingent, crowded with their baggage on to a big raft, slowly approached the *Kidgeree* as she lay in the Suez roads, Eva Grey was leaning over the ship's side, sharing the interest the other London passengers took in the newcomers.

When Melfort Prayte came on board, she came up to him at once with frank, outstretched hand.

"I *am* so glad you are coming by this ship, Mr. Prayte. I'm so homesick, and you seem like a whiff of home!"

Even a hideous white pith helmet could not disfigure her. Melfort Prayte thought her eyes the color of the soft, shimmering, purple Soudanese mountains rising across the glazy bay to the west.

Prayte had, of course, gone through the fire years before. He had had his *grandes passions* for giddy grass widows in the hills, his cooler intel-

lectual friendships with kindred souls during the cold weather in the plains. He had dallied with English maidens during his holidays, and allowed them to imagine they were going to capture him. Yet, somehow, the feeling which arose within him during the ten days the *Kidgeree* took between Suez and Bombay, with regard to Eva Grey, was different to any he had ever experienced before. She was so very young, so naïve, and so pretty. Melfort Prayte found himself watching her during sultry noontides under the awnings, or in the mysterious glamor of tropical moonlight nights when the wake of the *Kidgeree* was a mass of phosphorescence, and wondering to himself if a fresh, innocent child like this would not be a rest woven into the life of a busy, toiling man always in touch with the seamy side of things.

She had plenty to prattle to him about; her old life in the quiet country vicarage with her uncle, now closed forever—her father dead so many years before—her mother still young and very beautiful, she said, whom she was longing to see, whom she was preparing to adore, though

she could hardly remember her at all—her rather elderly, stolid step-father, of whom she knew next to nothing. Then she was eager for information about the future Indian life. But, somehow, the idea of this fresh, half-opened little English daisy, plunged into the narrow, gossiping, shallow, frivolous life of an Indian station, flirted with by half the sub-alterns and all the junior civilians, jarred on Melfort Prayte. He told her for choice about native life, and described the beautiful scenery of the Himalayas, as he lay prone on a coil of ropes at the feet of her long chair. How the two richest natives of the Dustipore district, who were anxiously awaiting this powerful advocate's return, to offer him, each, a *douceur* of many hundred rupees that he should not accept a brief from either side, would have marveled to see him so absorbed in this child.

He could hardly himself define what it was made him arrange, only the day before they reached Bombay, with Eva's chaperon, to accompany the ladies up country as far as their ways lay together. Anyhow, it staved off the saying good-bye.

Most of the *Kidgeree's* passengers put up at Watson's Hotel, a huge American kind of caravansary. They sat in the broad veranda after breakfast, idling over the tempting wares that Cashmere shawl merchants and Lucknow silversmiths displayed on the floor before them, and reading the last European papers. Prayte had found a friend, Cis Sabretasche, A. D. C. to the General at Dustipore, just going home. Eva Grey was chatting with a man in the Derbyshire Drabs, and his bride, with whom she had fraternized during the voyage. These latter were discussing an invitation they had received from a friend's friend to stay on their way up country.

"It is a very nice letter," mused the bride; "I wonder what sort of a person she is?"

"If you don't mind showing me the letter, perhaps I can give you an idea," suggested Melfort Prayte, from the depths of an enormous armchair.

"Nice woman, I should think," said he, after perusing the epistle; "but a great talker, to judge by the long tail of her capital C's, and no

organization—she runs her words together so."

"That's just what the Smiths told us; you can't get a word in edgeways, they said. And I think she must be rather muddle-headed, for she asked us first to come on Friday, and now says she can't have us till Saturday, as she is engaged on Friday."

Eva Grey opened her eyes wide.

"How awfully interesting! And can you really tell what people are like from their writing?"

"Let's try him again," suggested Dalton of the Drabs. "Here's a letter from a man I know intimately; was at school with him."

"Very fond of classical poetry, I should say: his capital letters are all printing letters."

"Right you are, he was a Dab at Greek and Latin."

"And now, would you mind looking at this? I am awfully anxious to know what the writer is like," pleaded Eva.

Prayte rose, threw away the end of his cigar, and bending over the little figure in the low chair, took the letter from her.

He scanned it a moment or two;

then his face clouded. He passed it back to her, and turned away, saying in a constrained voice :

"I'd rather not tell you anything about that. That's the writing of a bad woman."

There was an awkward silence while you might count ten. Eva, the letter motionless in her hand, followed him with her eyes expressing utter bewilderment. Then she flushed very red, and rose and left the balcony.

The others looked at each other as her white dress vanished round the corner.

"What on earth have I done?" asked Prayte, anxiously.

"The letter was from her mother," said the little bride, in an awestruck voice. "She was reading it to me not long ago."

"Her mother! Good Heavens, Prayte, you *have* put your foot into it!" exclaimed Sabretasche, with a shrug.

"But who on earth's her mother, then ; for if ever a hand showed——"

"Do you mean to say you don't know?" asked Sabretasche. "Why, man, after all these years of India,

do you mean to say you've never heard of Mrs. Churchhill, wife of Churchhill in the Native Infantry——"

"The 'all-embracing mother church?' Of course I have! Curse it all, what an ass I have been!" muttered Prayte, angrily.

"The best-preserved woman in India. Don't you remember how Her Ex. had to put down her foot about her two seasons ago, at Simla, His Ex. was so gone over her; only Lord George and the other A. D. C.'s stood her friends. Then, further back again, long ago, there was that little shooting-party got up in the Terai for royalty, when Mrs. Churchhill went on special invitation!"

Melfort Prayte gnashed his teeth.

"I suppose the daughter knows nothing?" he asked.

"How the deuce should she? Pretty girl—but nothing like her mother, though. Wonderful woman! Little Jenkins, in the Gunners, went to utter grief this year at Naini, after she threw him over for Dabbs in the Secretariat—took to gambling—has had to leave the service. Wonderful woman!" and Sabre-

tasche lit another cigar meditatively.

Prayte rose and took himself off into his own room. He was too annoyed with himself to bear the chatter of the others. To think that he should have been thus the means of opening this innocent child's eyes to her mother's depravity—the mother she admired so much, to the meeting with whom she was looking forward so eagerly! That he should thus inadvertently have seared this white young soul! The thought made him mad. He cursed graphology and her sister arts, and devoutly wished he had never dabbled in them.

But the worst was yet to come. He saw no more of Miss Grey or her chaperon that day. In the evening a chilly note was brought him from the latter, saying that, as they were going to wait a day or two longer in Bombay than they had expected, they would not trouble him for his escort up country.

So the dream was over. But for its abrupt ending it might, in another day or two, have become a reality.

Prayte hurled himself into the

night mail and was whisked off to Dustipore. There he found plenty of fat cases awaiting him; both sides anxious to retain him. Yet he was not happy.

That cold-weather season at Dustipore women discussed Melfort Prayte with some bitterness.

"He used to be *so* nice before he went home last spring. But men do get *so* spoilt, their heads so turned in England, because there are so few of them; he hardly will speak to a lady now!"

A good many months later, when he went down to Lucknow for the race week, he came across Eva Grey at a ball at the Chutter Munzil. She was looking very lovely and very happy, chatting away to a good-looking young gunner. Prayte, on inquiry, found she was engaged to him, and going to be married very shortly.

Prayte suddenly felt that he hated balls and similar stupidities, and went and had a strong whisky-and-soda at the peg table with his informant.

Returning, and meditating taking his departure, he felt so bored, sud-

denly round a corner he came upon Eva enlarging gayly to an admiring group about her wedding presents.

"Isn't this a lovely bracelet? Mr. Dabbs, the Secretary, has sent me this; he was an old friend of my father's, he says. And *do* look at this, isn't it too beautiful? Fancy, the Viceroy sent me that! Only fancy! Mother saw so much of Lady Wrenthamdale when she was at Simla two years ago, you know."

Then she turned suddenly and perceived Prayte, got very red, and cut him dead.

He saw the wedding in the paper and then lost sight of her altogether. He came across her mother, though, at a hill station two years later, very loud and noisy, at a very late, or rather early, second supper after the Bachelors' Ball. No one seemed surprised; Mrs. Churchhill *was* generally very noisy after supper now, people said.

It was when he was ordered home by the doctors after an attack of fever and general overwork that he met Eva again. She was sitting in the Row on Sunday morning with her husband and her little girl, and

she looked to him so altered, so much sadder, the girlish light-heartedness all gone out of her. But she came up to him with outstretched hand, and her old frank manner:

"Mr. Melfort Prayte, I *must* speak to you? I have so often wanted to meet you again, and to apologize for my behavior to you. I thought once that you wished to be rude to me, wished to insult me; something you said hurt me very much—I was very young and very inexperienced at the time. You remember what I allude to? Alas! you were quite right; but I didn't know, and I was angry with you. Will you forgive me and let me introduce you to my husband?"

A Southsea Bubble.

SHE was Winsome, with a big W, if ever fluffy hair, a tip-tilted nose, and long-lashed, laughing eyes, half closing with fun when she smiled, can make a girl so. When first I knew her she might have been no more than eighteen; but she was more "in the know" than many a country-brought-up maiden of eight-and-thirty. But then the Misses Barringer had had rather a hot-house education. They were Southsea girls. Papa Barringer had once been a major in the something or other; but he had died off long ago, leaving a small, meek widow, who was utterly unable to cope with

her offspring. Of these, the eldest, Belle, a tall, handsome, black-eyed girl, was not so young as she once had been, and had, moreover, a past. There were several versions of that past current in Southsea society. Miss Barringer was on easy terms with all the men, naval and military, who went out much; but no one ever dreamed of being seriously in love with her, much less of proposing to her. It was noticeable, too, that her friends were all of one sex. Her own was not kind to Belle Barringer. Eventually, I believe, she ran away with the head groom in a riding establishment, and may be seen any day taking out riding-parties of young ladies over the Brighton downs.

The second sister, Sally, had been badly jilted by a naval man she was engaged to, a second-lieutenant of the troopship *Alligator*, who whiled away his six months of summer idleness in wiling away her affections. Sally then took to good works. She was the right-hand and highly-valued coadjutor of the very ornamental vicar of St. Estephe's, who had an invalid wife who never

went out. He said he did not know what he should have done without Miss Barringer's kindness. He left Southsea later, rather suddenly. It was understood he had taken a chaplaincy in Hawaii. About the same time Sally Barringer joined a Sisterhood, and we heard afterward she had gone out to nurse the lepers in that same happy island. But Southsea gossip was rather vague about it all, and the subsequent vicar of St. Estephe's had a very strong-minded wife, who managed the parish herself.

Dottie, our heroine, was the youngest. At the time I am speaking of no one had very much to say against her, and there was undeniably a great deal to be said in her favor. She was a small person, capable of infinite possibilities, and decidedly with a future before her.

We were quartered in the Anglesea barracks. India was looming before us. It was our last summer in England, and we were bent on having a good time. We gave a big ball, and started a regimental yacht. None of us knew much about sailing, but we had good fun, and nobody was

drowned. We had some adventures, though. Wilton, who was our skipper—chosen on account, I believe, of having failed for the navy before he tried Sandhurst—Freddy Duffield, and another, with Belle and Dottie Barringer, got becalmed one afternoon down the Solent off Calshot Point. They had to leave the yacht, wherein the sleeping accommodation was of the slenderest description, and row ashore, and put up for the night at a wayside inn. Nobody minded about Belle ; but I was sorry about Dotty, she was so young ; and Freddy Duffield was sorry too.

For Freddy was getting really hard hit. Poor Freddy ! he was such a good-natured old fellow, so single-minded and sincere himself, that he saw no distance at all, and expected everyone to be the same. It is a very praiseworthy kind of character ; one which, it is to be hoped, gets its reward in another and a better world, for it certainly meets with the reverse in this. Dottie had flirted a bit with us all around, not excepting the old C. O., who positively beamed upon her, and called

her "That pretty child." To my own knowledge I found her making appointments for evening strolls on the pier with young Scamperleigh, and it was at her suggestion that he got up that theater expedition, wherein the chaperone mysteriously failed at the last moment. We came back about 2.30 A. M.—the theater train late, as usual — and had an impromptu supper at the Barringers'. I remember Belle disturbed the maternal slumbers upstairs by the choruses we emitted to her banjo songs.

About this time came the great Prosington-Duffield row. Prosington was not long married, and was kept in great order by his wife. He made some remark about Mademoiselle Dottie in the anteroom, and not altogether in her praise. I forget what it was, probably a repetition of some uncharitable story of Southsea gossips, which had filtered to him through his wife.

Duffield took it up furiously, and exploded a bomb-shell into the middle of us by announcing that he was engaged to the young lady in question.

He and Prosington did not speak for a month. Upon us all fell a great awe. We, the Royal Scilly Islanders, were a most ancient and honorable corps, who, the outside world averred, gave themselves no end of airs. We were by no means so particular about other ladies in society, but our regimental ladies had always been perfect Cæsar's wives. The C. O. took Freddy's little affair up. His father was communicated with. Freddy suddenly got a long spell of leave and left Southsea till we were on the point of embarking for India.

Sir Duncan's shooting in Yorkshire was famous. Freddy was the eldest son, and it was meet he should have his share of it before he left England. The arrangement was entirely for his good. But Freddy fumed. He stood with his broad shoulders against the mantelpiece of his room in barracks one evening, as I smoked a cigar with him, and held forth.

"It's an infernal conspiracy! That's what it is. The sweetest, dearest little girl—yes, of course, I know—I'm not going to marry the

sisters! I will take the poor child away out of that horrible set—think what she must have gone through—so young and so innocent. The Pater will come round. He's only to see her. Nobody can look into Dottie's eyes and withstand her. And if he thinks he's going to play the stern parent with me, he's much mistaken. We're too fond of each other for anyone to come between us. By Jove! if you'd only seen the poor child this afternoon when I told her my leave was in orders!"

And so on, with variations, as long as I would listen. Next day he departed, and one could only hope for the best. We read in the *World* that Sir Duncan Duffield was having a very smart party for the twelfth.

It was at an afternoon dance on board the *Inferior*. The Misses Barringer were there under the nominal chaperonage of Mrs. Golightly, a grass widow, whose husband was at sea. I passed them by on the other side, for the edict had gone forth in the mess that, after poor Freddy's fiasco, the Barringers were to be avoided. But I found myself

close to Dottie at the tea-table, the center of a knot of sub-lieutenants. A fellow in the Horse Marines from Westney was pestering for another dance.

"*Défendu, mon cher!*" laughed Dottie, shaking at him a little plump left hand, on the third finger of which glittered a diamond ring. "My young man won't let me dance more than three times—not with the C-in-C. himself."

And then again on the tennis ground, when a sudden shower sent all the players huddling under the central shed. We grumbled at the wet August, and Dottie shot a wicked glance across to me as she remarked, rather loud to her partner:

"Yes, I hear from Yorkshire the weather's just beastly for the moors!"

So we feared the worst.

The day of our embarkation came. Freddy had returned. The great white troopship lay drawn up at the jetty, under the old clock tower which has witnessed so many partings, ready to receive the Royal Scillies, as, no longer in smart red uniform, but in hospital-like sea-kit

of blue serge and stocking cap, they marched, like a long swarm of dark ants, into her side.

The departure or arrival of a trooper is to the fair South Sea islander a little amusement, kindly provided by Government for her during the drear winter months, when the pier is impossible and tennis is not. All the world was on the poop-deck of the *Jumbo*, to say good-by to us. I stumbled upon Freddy and Dottie in a secluded corner behind the piano on the stern lockers, having a fond farewell, and, to do her justice, the girl's sweet eyes were very dewy.

When we got to India we were sent to Bulamabad. It is a splendid sporting station, but socially deficient. Except our own ladies, the female part of society, what there was of it, seemed touched with the tar-brush and unattractive. Like the rest of us, Freddy became immersed in the delights of pig-sticking and black-buck shooting. When he took leave in the hot weather he eschewed the allurements of the frivolous hill stations, and went to Cashmere and slew bears. But the bare whitewashed

room of the bungalow I shared with him was adorned with photos of Dottie Barringer in every conceivable costume, from one taken at the age of fifteen in a bathing-dress, with her hair down, as the heroine of the story of how "one sweet little maid washed herself ashore with a tablet of Pears' soap."

A year passed. The changes I have above alluded to took place in the Barringer family, and Mamma Barringer went to her much-needed rest. Freddy Duffield took a mysterious ten days' shooting leave, and, for a wonder, did not tell me what he was going after. We found he had taken the mail train to Bombay, and he returned with Dottie Barringer as Mrs. Freddy.

She was rather older and stouter-looking, her voice a trifle more shrill, but her manners and ways more *ingénue* than ever. We made the best of it. We Scilly Islanders kept our regimental *dhobis*, and did not put out our soiled linen to wash. And really, at first, Dottie behaved quite prettily. She was as quiet as a little mouse, sisterly to all of us, and quite grandmotherly to Freddy, who trot-

ted about at her beck and call like a tame great Newfoundland, and was asbsurdly happy.

But when the novelty of her life wore out, Dottie began to find Bulamabad less cheerful than Southsea. In the Scilly Islanders the first mess rule is: "Thou shalt not flirt with thy brother-officer's wife." Freddy's devotion, though gratifying, was *exigeant*, and began to pall.

It was probably *ennui* that, at the beginning of the hot weather, brought on an attack of fever. Mrs. Dottie lost her pretty English color, and the regimental "pill" prescribed the hills. Freddy took her up to Nynee Tal, and settled her at a tiny châtet on the rhododendron heights. But it was a sickly season at Bulamabad. We were short-handed, and he had to return to duty.

Mrs. Dottie must speedily have recovered her health at Nynee Tal, for "our special correspondent" there, began soon in the *Pioneer* to quote her and her doings in his gossipy letters. Now, it was her charming appearance at the Lieutenant-Governor's birthday fancy dress ball, attired as King Cophetua's beggar-

maid, her pretty pink skin, we were given to understand, peeping through her tatters. Then, it was posing as Rebecca at the Well, in some charity *tableaux*, simply swathed in pink muslin, most statuesque. Next, it was her coxing the Honorable Reggy Darlish's four-oar in the Civilians *versus* Soldiers boat-race. Naughty Nynee was very full that season, and the fun was fast and furious round the lovers' lake. The Honorable Reggy was the Lieutenant-Governor's A. D. C., very fascinating, as many a grass widow at many a hill station would aver, and the hero of a *cause célèbre*, out of which he had escaped by the skin of his teeth. We read that it was Mrs. Duffield who nominated his pony in the Ladies' Bracelet at the races ; that it was Mrs. Duffield scored such a success acting with him in "Sweethearts" and "Uncle's Will" at the great theatricals.

Old Mrs. De Ferret, the collector's wife at Bulamabad, whose stories were as highly spiced as her curries, bluntly informed us that our Mrs. Duffield had set up a "bow-wow" at Nynee Tal, and that the "bow-wow" was Captain Darlish. But we were a

simple-minded sporting corps, unversed in the wicked ways of the Himalayas, and we did not pay much attention to her.

Freddy was jubilant over his wife's sensation, and lived on the letters she sent him.

"Such nonsense" he said to me one day, as he launched out into a new polo-pony, "that people talk about the expense of life in India, and of two establishments, the hills, and so on. Why, the missus, with all the going out she has, finds the little trousseau she brought out quite enough, and her bills are nothing! I offered to send her up a pony to ride, but she says it would be too expensive, and that she can always borrow a mount."

It struck me, somehow, that this did not quite tally with the *Pioneer* correspondent's glowing descriptions of the beautiful Mrs. Duffield's wondrous toilettes at the big balls. But I dare say she knew best about her own clothes. Women are so clever.

It was terribly hot weather at Bulamabad. One always feels the second hot weather more than the first. We were sent out into cholera

camp, which is not cheerful in June. Then, when at last the rains broke, there was a great deal of fever. Freddy and I both went down with it, and as soon as were fit to move he suggested that we should take ten days at Nynee Tal, where he would put me up.

"So thankful that dear child has been safe up there, out of this hell-upon-earth!" he would mutter to himself, when at his worst.

So off we started. A hideous day in the train, thermometer at—whatever you like; a jolting night in a *dâk-gharry*, sleep impossible. Then, with the dawn, the purple masses of the Himalayas, and a long ride on ancient hill-ponies up, and up, and up, by winding mountain paths, yclept roads; over rushing torrents, and through ilex woods, all fresh and green and cool to our weary eyes. But it was a gray day in the rains. We had a sharp shower on our way up, and we found a dense mist hanging over the little lake. As we rode along the steep zigzag path up the bare mountain-side leading to Mrs. Duffield's house, the fog lifted, and a

cold gust of wind cut down from a cleft in the hills.

It nearly blew off my now most unnecessary pith helmet, and it fluttered something down from the heights above, something small and white. It fell at my pony's feet; it was a letter.

"Give it to me," I said to the native attendant who was accompanying me, hanging on to my quadruped's tail.

"What on earth have you got there?" asked Freddy, riding up close to me and looking over my shoulder.

"A letter blown down from someone's hand overhead," I replied, "It's rather muddy." But I read:

DEAREST REGGY:

Hubby turned up unexpectedly. Keep away to night. Will send word. Usual hour when coast is clear. Yours as always,

DOTTIE.

I read, and Freddy read too, looking over my shoulder.

Reading, we turned a sharp corner up the path, and came suddenly on the other zigzag upon a man in a much belaced uniform on a pony, standing

still. His groom at that moment climbed painfully up the side of the rocks from below, whence we had come, and joining his hands, approached his master.

"Sahib! I have searched everywhere. I cannot find the letter. perhaps the wind——"

But I had recognized the man in uniform.

"Hullo, Darlish!" I exclaimed.

I stopped short. For Freddy turned and gave me an inquiring look. I shall never forget his face as long as I live. It was livid with rage.

He dug his spurs into his pony and went for Darlish.

The latter was taken quite by surprise. The path was very narrow, the edge rotten with recent rains, and the rocks sheer.

The ponies collided, staggered, floundered, struggled, and fell over the side with their riders.

Darlish got clear of his and saved himself by catching hold of the branch of a tree. Freddy and his horse rolled over and over ever so far.

The pony was killed, and Freddy, when we found him, was lying motionless, bleeding profusely from

a cut on the head. We picked him up, his groom and I, and carried him up to his house.

His wife met us in the veranda, with shrieks of terror.

"Don't you think you'd better clear out of this?" said I, harshly as ever I spoke to a woman, when she came forward to see to him. She slunk away into another room.

We got a doctor; but the skull was fractured. It was a case of hours. Toward dawn he came to, and called for Dottie.

I sent her in, and stood just outside in the veranda, looking down into the dark lake below, and listening to the howlings of a jackal near the native bazaar.

Freddy spoke a little, but his mind had gone back to the old Southsea days.

"Dot! Get your mother to let you come out for a sail—this afternoon—I'll meet you on the pier——"

And he died at daybreak with her hand in his.

After Long Years of Pain.

I WAS loafing. I generally was in those days. That is the worst of having plenty of money and time with nothing to do, and no one to think of but yourself. *Nous avons changé tout cela;* but not in the days I am writing about.

It was the time of year when I made a business of yachting for a few weeks ere the duty of shooting carried me to Scotland. The *Plaisaunce* lay at anchor in Flanerville Harbor, and I was sauntering along the *plage* in front of the Casino, studying the human form divine in its bathing-costumes as it emerged, in bewildering variety and attractiveness, from the *cabanes*.

"Je vous en prie, monsieur, aidez-moi trouver ma cabane?"

The speaker was a small dark-eyed boy, clad in a dripping scarlet garment, who was vainly endeavoring to find his local habitation and his clothes among the row of precisely similar erections which faced the waves.

"Savez-vous le numéro?" I inquired, with a fine British accent.

His little face brightened instantly.

"That's just it! I've kite fordot it. Oh, it's all right, fanks; I see Célestine coming. Fanks awfully!"—and away he scampered to his *bonne*.

This was my first introduction to Jack.

We met again in the afternoon at the Casino. The ball-room was crowded, and the scene of wild orgies. The *bal-a'enfants* was just over, and a swarm of eager youngsters of every age, and of not a few nationalities—French, English, American, Russian—were drawing in the *tombola* for toys, which was the crown of the afternoon's diversion. As I looked on, amused, my acquaintance of the morning, now clothed in a sailor suit, rushed up to a lady standing beside

me, proudly exhibiting a "Polichinelle" doll. He recognized me, and begged me to admire it. I was jostled at that moment by the crowd, and knocked Mr. Punch out of his hands. It fell among everyone's feet. We had a great hunt. When we recovered it, Polichinelle was in pieces, and Jack in tears. What could I do but purchase him another lottery ticket, in order to replace the toy. All these transactions led to my talking to Jack's mother.

She was just the kind of woman whom you would have expected to have such a dear little son. Unmistakably English—though Jack looked very dark, and his French was irreproachable, tall and straight and strong, with sweet, dark eyes—a thorough, well-bred 'un.

That evening I ran against the Sandham-Sollys at the *petits chevaux* table in the Casino, we all of us being deeply interested in staking small sums on the gyrations of the little gilt quadrupeds. They invited me to *déjeuner* with them next morning at the Grand Hotel. I went and I met Jack's mother, and was introduced to her as Madame d'Esterre.

"Such a charming woman, so glad you like her!" whispered Mrs. Sandham-Solly, as we imbibed black coffee and cigarettes on the terrace. "My oldest friends, she and her twin sister, poor Constance, who went out to an aunt in India and got killed in the mutiny—such a sad story. But Florence—this is Florence—was always the handsomest—married a Frenchman; he died two years ago. Yes, Jack's a darling! His mother's wrapped up in him!"

Jack came and leant on my knee and looked up at me with his dark eyes.

"Will 'ou do somefing for me? Will 'ou take me and mummy for a sail in 'our big boat. I vant to go in a big boat!"

"Oh, Jack! Jack!" put in his mother.

"But I will, with pleasure, Jack!" I hastened to interpose; "if you will ask your mother and Mr. and Mrs. Solly to come, too."

It was the first of many a sail we five had in the *Plaisaunce* that August. It is a lovely coast off Flanerville; the weather was fair a blue sea, and a summer breeze,

Ere long Jack had become the sworn friend of every man of the crew, and insisted on wearing the yacht ribbon on his hat. They were pleasant days. I can see now Madame d'Esterre lolling in a big wicker chair, and Jack trying to steer. All too soon, for me at least, they came to an end.

A little more than a year later I started for six months' big-game shooting in India. I had had good sport a few years back after bison and moose in the Rockies, and had spent a winter cruising off the Albanian coast, shooting deer, and pig, and snipe. But I had not been East yet. I took the overland route, you know—whirled like a pill in a pill-box from Calais to Marseilles for three days. *Wagon-lits* were not. Then, *viâ* Alexandria, through Egypt to Suez. There I found the P. and O. mail-boat awaiting me, with the passengers who had come the long sea-route through the Bay. We overlanders were towed out with our baggage on a sort of barge to where the great vessel lay in the roads opposite the mouth of the Canal. The ancient inhabitants of

the ship stood leaning over the gunwale examining us with curiosity. As I stepped on deck I thought I saw a familar form.

"Madame d'Esterre! Is it you? I am glad. And how's my friend Jack?"

Her face had lighted up on first seeing me with that sweet smile I had learned to like so well. But at my last words she shrank back as if I had struck her. Hardly responding to my greeting she turned away and hurried below.

A tall, soldierly-looking man, who was standing beside her, came forward.

"Allow me to apologize for my sister. You seem an old friend of hers. You inquired after her boy. Poor little Jackie died three months ago. It was a terrible shock to her. In fact she has not got over it yet. I am ordered out to India to my battery, and my wife has persuaded Madame d'Esterre to go with us for a change. She and I are alone in the world now. My other poor sister died in India some years ago."

I found Madame d'Esterre much altered. All the buoyancy seemed

crushed out of her. To me she was as charming as ever, but at first Jack's name was not mentioned between us. However, I had been Jack's friend, and gradually, very gradually, I got her to speak of him—of the days at Flanerville, of Jack's pretty ways, of his exploits on the *plage* or on the *Plaisaunce*. It was a somewhat sad ten days that we spent together, steaming down the Red Sea, the arid Arabian mountains fringing the horizon, a gleaming sea below, a cloudless sky above. I took her ashore at Aden, to divert her mind a little. We drove out over a desert land to see the famous water-tanks. We bought ostrich feathers in the bazaar, and over the ship's side we threw coppers for the amphibious youth to dive for from their little canoes into the clear water. Then on again. There were still calm balmy nights in the Indian Ocean, the Southern Cross shining overhead, and a long wake of phosphorescence behind made by the ship's course. Then came the purple ghauts and the lovely palm-fringed Bay of Bombay—and, good-by. No, *au revoir*. I promised Major Alkirk that I

would come and stay with them when I went north.

I went south first, though, and shot some tigers on foot in Central India, and slew much deer and such small fry, living the while in tents and dâk bungalows, or as the guest of various civilians, who preserved big game in their districts much as an English landowner preserves pheasants.

Colonel Llanover was one of these, an agreeable man about my own age, a thorough sportsman, and an hospitable, if somewhat reserved, host. He was rather solitary in the remote station of Guramabad, having only a couple of European subordinates, and pressed me to stay on long after my visit was supposed to be at an end. I liked him, though he was so grave, not to say melancholy; but the black-buck shooting in his district was superb, and I stayed.

One day I was turning over some of my boxes in search of something, Llanover standing by, when I came suddenly on a photograph of Madame d'Esterre. She had had it done during the few days I spent with her and the Alkirks at Bombay, at my

special wish, as a little parting souvenir. It was a beautiful picture, though she looked grave and sad in it, in her dark dress. I could not help taking it up for a few moments. Colonel Llanover looked over my shoulder.

"Good God!" he gasped. "Where did you get that?"

"What! do you know her?" I exclaimed.

"Know her! know her! It's my poor Constance."

"You are making some mistake," I rejoined. "This is a friend of mine, Mrs. d'Esterre. She gave it me at Bombay."

He looked at the photograph closely.

"I beg your pardon, but it was so like—so like. It gave me a shock for a moment—opened an old wound. I thought it was a Miss Alkirk I—I—used to know."

"Miss Alkirk," I replied. "Mrs. d'Esterre was a Miss Alkirk! Can you be thinking of her sister, who died."

"I am," he rejoined. "Constance Alkirk—who—who died."

He turned away and said no more

at the time. But that evening, as we sat smoking after dinner in the veranda, he told me his story. It was getting hot weather, and the night was still and sultry, and intensely dark. All was very silent, save for the distant howl of a jackal or the bark of a pariah dog. It was a short sad story Colonel Llanover told.

Constance Alkirk had come out to India to an uncle but a few months before the outbreak of the Mutiny. Major Llanover was quartered at the same station. They played croquet together, and danced together, almost every evening for a few weeks, and then they were engaged. Then, quite suddenly, like a mighty conflagration, came the great rebellion, scouring all the country. The lovers parted, Llanover to his duty in the thickest of the fight before Delhi; Constance to a place of refuge, which, alas! turned out to be a means of destruction. Everyone knows the events that followed. A handful of Europeans starved and sickened into surrender; the men cut down, the women and children massacred, not a trace of a survivor. That was the story Llanover told.

He was a rising official now, in a responsible and coveted berth, a man who was making a mark. But, as I looked at his worn, grave face, and thought of the lonely bachelor life he was leading in Guramabad, I realized that all the joy had gone out of his life.

Next morning I got a letter, brought out by the primitive postal arrangements of the district and carried for miles through forest and plain in a basket on a coolie's back.

"When are you coming to see us?" wrote Madame d'Esterre, dating from the hill station of Simree. "John has two months' leave, and we are going on a march into the interior of the hills. Come and join us. No civilization, camp life, lovely scenery, and shooting."

A few days later found me, after a long, hot, dusty journey over sun-baked plains in rail and post carriage, mounted on a sturdy hill pony, ascending winding mountain paths amid shady forests and bawling torrents to lovely Simree, perched among ilex woods on the mountain side.

"I am glad you have come," said

Mrs. Alkirk privately to me. "You did Florence so much good on board ship."

"You see I was Jack's friend," I answered, and then told them I had been staying with Colonel Llanover.

"Ah!" said John Alkirk, "I should like to see him, for poor Constance's sake! Letter's passed at the time, but we never met. Now we too have come out to India I wish he would come and see us."

A letter was written to the brother-in-law that was to have been. Llanover answered that nothing would please him better, and that he would make arrangements to take a month's leave and follow us, as we marched by easy stages.

What a motley train we were as we set off from Simree very early that bright April morning upon our nomad expedition. Major Alkirk and myself rode hill ponies, as also did Florence d'Esterre, and wore white pith helmets, for the sun is hot even in the hills. Mrs. Alkirk was carried, *à la* Guy Fawkes, in an arm-chair on a pole, yclept a dandy. Servants followed on foot, some ten or twelve among us, the cook shoulder-

ing the iron spit with which he roasted. Before and after us toiled troops of coolies, laden with our tents, our camp furniture, and our baggage. Our way lay along narrow mountain paths, dignified by the name of roads, cut out of the hillside and overhanging the deep gorges. The mountains were richly clothed with ilex and with rhododendrons, bursting here and there into scarlet bloom. Ferns of all sorts carpeted the precipices and fringed the branches of the trees. Starting at dawn, we halted for an *al fresco* breakfast in some shady spot with a lovely panorama of purple hills stretching, fold after fold, away to China, and ere the midday sun was hot, reached our new camping-ground, where our canvas home was rapidly being erected. A lazy afternoon, with perhaps a little shouting of black partridges or pheasants, a bath in a stream, and then dinner in the veranda of the mess tent, by the light of a great, full moon.

A pleasant idle life. For a few days we were very happy. The color had returned to Florence d'Esterre's cheek, and the sparkle to her eye.

As for me, true that I was not getting much sport, that game was not so plentiful as it might have been, but—I did not care.

Three days after we had started, Colonel Llanover joined us by forced marches. It was an odd meeting, out there in the mountains, of those three, bound by the sacred memory of one long dead. I did not see it, but took myself off fishing a few miles away, and did not return till dinner-time.

When we had been a week away from Simree, Mrs. Alkirk, as caterer, began to hint that our supplies were running short, and that it was advisable that we should get to some place where we could replenish them. The tiny villages of mud huts we had passed through afforded hardly as much as a fowl, much less mutton, white flour, or potatoes. So we descended into rather a wide, low valley, and encamped by the side of a tolerably large and sedate stream. The village looked a good size, and was the summer capital of a small independent Rajah, whose state ran up into the Himalayas from the plains below. The Rajah's palace

we were shown, on a solitary rocky mound above the stream, surrounded by all mud-walls. We determined to make a halt there of a few days, and to send back to Simree for letters and newspapers, enjoying in the meantime the unwonted luxuries of mutton, plaintains, and plenty of fresh milk. We caught marseer, too, in the river.

One evening, after fishing, Llanover and I strolled up the mountain that rose beyond the stream, following a tiny track used by natives or goats. At a turn of the path we came suddenly on two or three coolies attired in the rather shabby and dirty finery which proclaimed them the Rajah's attendants. They were squatting, resting by the path, and near them sat a small boy. He was clothed in a long cloth garment, and his bare feet were thrust into pointed slippers. He had evidently been playing about, for his turban had fallen off, disclosing his dark, closely cropped hair. He turned and looked at us with curiosity as we approached. I stopped short in the middle of the path, transfixed with astonishment.

The boy was little Jack come to life again! The same size, the same dark eyes, the same winning expression, despite the difference of dress.

I rubbed my eyes bewildered.

"Whose boy is this?" I asked the attendants.

"The late Rajah's son, your Highness," replied the slatternly menial, with a salaam.

"What a strange likeness," I thought to myself, as the boy walked on in front of me.

Suddenly I heard a noise and a shriek from one of the servants. On the steep hillside above us a cow or goat had, in grazing, loosened some rocks, and a shower of great stones and bowlders came flying down upon us.

The child either did not hear or heed, but walked on ahead unconscious of his danger. Then suddenly he stopped, gazing upward panic-stricken, as a large bowlder bore down toward him with fearful speed. I rushed forward, and, seizing the boy, pulled him out of danger into a safe spot.

When all was quiet again, the servants rushed up, after the manner of

their kind, and overwhelmed the child with their attentions.

When we returned to camp Llanover related the little incident. But I suppressed all mention of the extraordinary likeness I had noticed between the little Rajah and Florence's lost darling.

As we sat at dinner, however, under the outside awning of our little mess-tent, doing justice to the excellent repast of four courses which Ali Bux, with the magic of a native cook, contrived to send up from the hole in the ground where he was conducting his mysterious culinary operations, we were startled by the arrival of a messenger from the palace on the hill.

"They had heard white Sahibs had arrived in this place, where white Sahibs came but rarely. The wife of the late Rajah was very ill, was like to die. Had the Sahibs any English medicine? Would they see her?"

"I am no Doctor Sahib," explained Colonel Llanover, who took command of the situation, being an excellent Hindoostanee scholar, and having long experience of the coun-

try to boot. "What is more, no Rajah's *purdah* woman would see me, even were she dying."

"But, Sahib," rejoined the man, "this one is English. She was the late Rajah's favorite wife—her he brought from down below when the troubles were on. She is very ill."

"English!" we exclaimed.

"Some half-caste girl, no doubt," put in Llanover. "But as, doubtless, she has a wish to see me, I will go. Bearer, bring my medicine-chest; I have doctored natives before now."

I asked permission to accompany him. Armed with a lantern we left the camp, and followed the servant up the hill and through a gateway closed with heavy iron-studded doors. By the dim light we could see we were in a courtyard, out of which opened various small chambers. Opposite to us was a larger building, without doors or windows, but with the openings between the pillars filled in with heavy mats. Through one of these our guide led us. A woman squatting on the ground rose up at our entrance.

"She sleeps—perhaps she will

never wake," and she motioned us to a sleeping form on a low bed in a corner.

But a small figure lying near it, half asleep, on the floor, sat up at our approach.

"Hullo!" I exclaimed. "This is my little friend of this afternoon," looking down into the sleepy dark eyes he was rubbing.

The sleeping woman stirred.

"Who's speaking?" she asked, faintly.

Llanover went up to her.

"I hear English. Jack, where are you?"

The child went and curled up beside her. She threw her arm around him.

"Jack! Jack! you musn't go far from mummy. You won't have her long!"

"Mummy go sleep again. Jack go sleep, too," murmured the boy, dozing again.

Llanover put out his hand and felt her pulse.

"I am the doctor Sahib," he said gently. "Tell me where you feel pain."

To our intense surprise the sick

woman gave a great start. Her eyes opened wide; she sat up and stared at him. The native behind, holding the lantern, shed a light on her white face and glittering dark eyes.

Llanover started back, and then looked at her transfixed. There was a silence of some minutes, broken only by the heavy breathing of the sleeping child.

Then she stretched out her arms.

"Edward! you have come at last!"

"Constance! Is it you?" he asked, in a choked voice.

Then I slipped out of the chamber, through the courtyard, and went and fetched Florence and her brother.

They had met, however, but to be parted. Years of grief and anxiety, of shame and of semi-captivity, had told upon Constance. She did not live many days. But she sent for me ere she died to thank me.

"You saved my Jack's life," she gasped painfully. "But for that I should never have known that you—all, Edward, the others—were here—so near."

We buried her under an ilex tree, on a lonely spur above the village,

within sight of the far-off snows. I read the burial service over her, and we placed a cross above her grave.

Then we turned home again, back from our gypsy expedition which had ended so strangely and so sadly.

We were to start before dawn, taking Jack with us, as the Rajah's people had handed us over the boy. Florence and I and he sat together taking a last farewell of his mother's grave. The sun had just set, and the mighty snow range above the forest-clad heights was glowing with an unearthly pink.

"Jack got no mummy now," murmured the child, sadly.

"Auntie will be your mummy," cried Florence, clasping him in her arms, with a sob.

"Jack," I said, bending over him, "ask Auntie if I may be your father then?"

Florence raised to me a face smiling through her tears, and glowing rosy like the snows.

I kissed it.

Any Port in a Dust-storm.

A TRUE STORY.

Don't you hear the general say,
"Strike your tents and march away!"
March—march—march—march—march
march-march,
Ma-arch--ma-arch, march away!

THE bugle-call to which British soldiers have set the above refrain was being sounded on the fifes as the players marched about the camp, and, ringing out sharp and shrill into the darkness, startled me into something like wakefulness.

But one sleeps soundly under canvas, and I must have dropped off again, for the next thing I heard was my bearer's muttered expostu-

lations and entreaties as he tried to rouse me.

I dozed again. It was not very unnatural, for it was but two o'clock in the morning. I seemed only just to have gone to bed.

The bearer gave it up, and tried in despair another maneuver. I heard the rattle of a tea-cup and saucer close to my ear, combined with a piteous entreaty that "he had brought his highness's tea. Would the Defender of the Poor deign to drink it?"

But other words, in a somewhat surly, but truly British, tone, mingling with the Hindoostanee whine, roused me completely.

"Ugh! Ain't it just jolly cold!"

"Blessed if it ain't fun a-waitin' 'ere till'e chooses to git up!" and there followed a stamping of feet and a rubbing of hands.

I was thus made aware that the fatigue-party were without — their hands on the guy-ropes, ready to bring down my canvas house about my ears.

I sprung up, allowed old Kodar Bux to clothe me, and buckling on my sword, emerged into the open.

It was dark and starlight, and intensely cold. Great fires, made of the straw which had served for the men's bedding, lit up with a lurid glare the dark canopy of mango-trees forming the grove under which we were encamped, and illumined the hurrying figures, clad in every variety of uniform and costume, which flitted about the scene. Here and there were faintly discernible the dim outlines of some huge elephant or camel or kicking mule, unwilling to be loaded. Shouts, cries, orders, filled the air, mingling with the groaning of the camels and the neighing and the shrieking of horses and mules.

The instant I had left my tent Kodar Bux and his coadjutors dragged the few articles of furniture it contained out on to the ground. With the speed, almost, of a conjuring trick, the little camp-bed collapsed, the bedding was rolled up into a bundle, a change came over the shape of the chair, table, and washstand, and the whole was thrown up on to the top of the bullock cart laden with trunks which stood awaiting it, the pile being sur-

mounted by the kettle which had boiled my cup of tea. The said cup was stuffed into a *kilter* (or wicker basket such as hillmen, both in Switzerland and in the Himalayas, carry on their backs), and the vehicle creaked and rumbled off, Kodar Bux in the rear.

But I had not waited to see the completion of this desolation. My place was in the lines, among the tents of my company, where all was bustle and apparent confusion. Each man, however, knew his place and his work. We had been many days already on the march, and this sort of thing had gone on every morning. The non-commissioned officers hurried from one group to another, urging, finding fault, hurrying and abusing the *drabbies* (natives) in charge of the mules and camels, for the latter alone seemed to know no discipline.

The camels, ranged with heads turned inward, in a vast half-circle just outside the camping-ground, were moaning and bubbling in anticipation of the heavy tents in store for them to carry, and the mules were kicking and screaming and

breaking loose, while the men tried to load their rolls of kits on to them, one on each side the pack-saddle. Mules always seemed possessed.

The stars had waned, and a grayness was breaking in the eastern horizon over the wide plain ere the tents were cleared and everything packed.

Then suddenly, and apparently unexpectedly, a G was sounded by the bugler standing in the middle of the camp.

The conjurer would not have been in it this time. As if by magic, at that sound the white village of canvas fell suddenly to the ground; where the neat line of tents had stood a moment before, were only billowy folds of white, with which the soldiers were struggling.

Another half hour, however, and all was over. In the road that ran—white and dusty in the gray morning light—along one side of the mango-grove, the regiment was falling in for parade, the band at their head.

The men hurried past me, not sorry to march off at a quick pace through the cold crisp air. But I was left behind, for I was on

baggage-guard, and left lamenting, stamping up and down to warm myself, with the collar of my cloak up.

I heard the orders given, passing from company to company. The band struck up, and the regiment moved off; the colonel, on his old gray Arab, riding on one side in front.

My duty, as in charge of the baggage-guard, was to see all the baggage animals off the ground, and to leave it clear and clean. But even when the regiment had departed this was by no means easy. The crows, indeed, impudent and fearless, after the nature of crows in India, began to return to their customary haunts in the mango-trees above, on the look-out for pickings. From a collection of mud hovels hard by, yclept a village, appeared the *ryot* and his progeny, on the same errand as the crows. But some of the baggage animals remained.

The mule-trains, tethered head to head, ambled off gradually, with here and there a halt and a skirmish between man and beast, accompanied by flying kits and boxes, and much loss of temper. The camels, loaded

with tents, had been bidden to rise. This they had done with the noisy expostulations and grumblings with which a camel always gets through his work. Then they, too, had shambled off, tied head to tail, the rolls of tents swaying on their horny sides, and their great evil-looking heads and legs swinging about, on the watch for a bite or a kick.

But the elephants had not started. It was growing late, and time to be off. It was nearly broad daylight, and getting warmer. Temperature changes rapidly in India even in the cold weather, and in not many hours it would be unpleasantly hot.

"What was the cause of the delay?" I inquired. I found it was one "Lord Canning," an elephant, who had come into camp the evening before with the commissariat supply of bread, and who was "bobbery"—that is to say, vicious.

"Lord Canning" was a very fine-looking animal, nearly twelve feet high, and stood waving his trunk in a very self-satisfied manner, but I must say that I did not relish the look in his eye. It appeared his *mahout* had fallen ill, and had to go

back, and he did not know or like his new one.

Everyone was for giving him a wide berth, for allowing that ugly trunk of his full play, and for awaiting his pleasure till he should choose to stalk on after the other great beasts of the commissariat train, who had gone down the road.

But I could not wait any longer for my lord, so, collecting my guard, we proceeded to clear the camping ground. The last I saw of "Lord Canning" he was waddling off under the trees, trumpeting and rattling the chains, which, in case it might be necessary to secure him, had been put round his hind legs.

A short time after, I and my little band emerged from the shadow of the grove, and marched off after the rest.

Though it was now daylight, the atmosphere was dim and heavy. The stars had all gone, but there was no sign of sunrise—generally such a gorgeous spectacle in tropical lands.

Instead, there was a dark bank of cloud, dark with a darkness other than of departing night, which was

crowding up the northern horizon. As I looked, it seemed as though it was bearing down upon us.

"Looks as though we shall have a storm!" I remarked to the corporal.

"Perhaps we'll get on to coffee-shop before it breaks, sir," was the rejoinder.

Coffee-shop is the longed-for halt on the early morning march, where a native caterer, seated in the ditch at a half-way spot, doles out hot coffee, *chuppatties*, and cheese to the hungry soldier, who has yet some miles to trudge ere he gets his breakfast.

The men stepped out. But the clouds gained on us. They got redder as they approached, with a lurid glow, which spread as thick as a London fog on the distant landscape and blotted it out.

Then, on the still morning air, there burst, with an awful suddenness, a soughing and a sighing of the wind, springing from no one knew where.

It grew and grew, louder and louder. With it came that bank of cloud, haze, or fog, whatever you like to term it.

Then it burst upon us. It was *sand*—fine, driving, pelting sand and dust, which swept into our eyes and mouths and lungs, as if it would blind and stifle us.

And with it came a darkness which literally might be felt. No one could see his hand before him. Soldiers, officers, natives, baggage-animals, and bullock-wagons stopped dead short where they stood.

The wind roared overhead. Every-one sought for shelter of some kind, or else lay flat on his face. I was in luck. I felt something hard and solid on my left hand. I felt again —it seemed high.

"Evidently the mud wall of some field," I thought, and crouched under it eagerly.

To my delight I found myself protected to a certain extent from the storm, though I was still in utter darkness. The wind was strong, too; it whizzed past my head every now and then, and at last it swept off my helmet, and whirled it into unknown space.

But I sat under my mud wall, complacently feeling myself better off than most people.

Something dark blew past my face. In the dim light it seemed like the falling branch of a tree, and I congratulated myself still further on my cozy nook.

How long the storm lasted I cannot tell. It seemed an age. But it departed as suddenly as it came.

The air grew clearer and lighter to breathe. Objects in front became indistinctly visible. I could see I was sitting on the dusty roadside. Turning to look on one side, my bare head rested for a moment against the wall at my back.

I started. It was *warm!* I turned round and looked at it. It was *black!* I jumped up and looked up. It was an elephant, kneeling down, against which I had been sitting ; I looked again, and caught his eye—his wicked eye !

There was no mistaking it, "Lord Canning" had been my shelter—my mud-wall !

The alacrity with which I sprang away from the resting-place I had so much appreciated, may be better imagined than described. I only felt safe when I found myself well

out of reach of that wicked waving trunk.

"*That* was the wind!" I said to myself, as I picked up my helmet. "*That* was the falling branch! Well, I'm very thankful it was not myself he picked up and threw about!" And I had reason to be.

Mrs. Heyle's Nurse.

H.M. Troopship *Alligator* had her steam up off Portsmouth jetty ready to start for Bombay. Already, the day before, frequent special trains had gorged her with troops, who now swarmed, almost unrecognizable as soldiers, in sea suits of blue serge and stocking caps, over her tiers of decks, and peered out of the hundreds of port-holes in her white sides. The jetty was crowded with spectators—some idly curious, some on business, some tearful; but the farewells had mostly been said at the garrison towns, whence the embarking troops came. On the deck the band of the regiment made the chill autumn air ring with "The girl I left behind me,"

"Auld lang syne," and other cheerful melodies.

The quarter-deck was crowded with officers in uniform, and ladies. The fair "Southsea Islander" was there in force. The arrival or departure of a troopship is always a field-day with her. She was bidding tender farewells to departing "cousins," who would probably be forgotten and replaced in a fortnight. Such is life by the waters of the Solent. Quartermasters, generals, and similar brass-hatted officials were fussing about, the ship's officers on duty emulating them in activity, while those unemployed were strolling about with shore friends, or taking mental stock of the new consignment of passengers, whose society they were to endure for the next month. After all the ship was their's—their home; and they resented somewhat the soldier-officers taking possession of it as if it belonged to them, and looking on that awe-inspiring personage, the post-captain in command, as if he were no more than the manager of a Government military hotel. But of friction between the two ser-

vices on board a troopship there is no end, and never will be.

At last the great hawsers were unfastened and the gangway removed. The *Alligator* was only connected with England by a narrow plank. Then, imperceptibly, her mighty screw began to churn the waters, and gradually to make its vibrations felt throughout its length and breadth. Deafening cheers from the soldiers lining the deck, bulwarks, and even the rigging, drowned the clang of the band, and re-echoed over the dockyard, even across to the breezy common. The *Alligator* was off, with her cargo of sixteen hundred souls. Some of these, fleeing from debts and misery, and, perhaps, even crime, were only too glad to cut themselves adrift from their native land. But over most there passed at least a vague feeling of sadness. Some had parted with all that life held dear to them, had severed ties that would never be re-knit. Even the most hardened, the most frivolous among the men were silent, and nearly all the hundred or so of women-folk wiped their eyes.

No one, perhaps, was more sorry for himself than Captain the Honorable Jack Wilderton, of the Queen's Own Sharpshooters, as, clad in the somber dark-green uniform which has earned for the Queen's the *sobriquet* of "the sweeps," he cocked his brimless forage-cap a shade more on one side of his close-cropped head, and lit a cigarette. It did seem such deuced hard lines that one fellow should be born heir to a title and thousands, and another fellow, his brother, only a year or two younger, should have to scratch along in a perpetual state of hard-uppishness, on three or four paltry hundreds. Why, Jack asked himself bitterly, had they both been brought up in the same way, both allowed to run bills at Eton, both trained to look upon horses, peasants, yachts, and society, as necessary adjuncts of life?

Poor Jack! he had been so happy in his regiment, he had found life so good at Aldershot (so convenient for town, you know), and now a stern parent had absolutely refused to pay up again on any consideration whatsoever, and had forced Jack into ex-

changing into the other battalion in India. No wonder he pitied himself exceedingly!

Two days later the *Alligator* had passed through that horrid Bay, and had sighted the cliffs of Spain. All who were ever going to do so had got over their sea-sickness, and were beginning to "take notice," as nurses say of babies. Friendships and enmities had been formed—so had whist-parties. There had, of course, been the inevitable fire-alarm, on the first afternoon at sea, while drilled both soldiers and sailors into their positions and duties in the event of such a catastrophe, while it scared the women-folk almost out of their sea-sickness. Life, both naval and military, was running on oiled wheels. The poor pestered paymaster breathed again, for peace even reigned in the saloon and in the ladies' cabin. Everyone appeared to have done grumbling about the berths assigned them, and as with departing sea-sickness came returning appetites, everyone found less fault with the *menus* provided. Even the captains, who, "neither fish, nor fowl, nor good red-herring," are for-

bidden to use either the field-officers' bath or the one shared by the naval officers and subalterns, had had their ablutionary wants satisfactorily attended to. But, if the paymaster counted upon repose, he had reckoned without the nursery. There, in eleven berths, were packed seventeen souls, mothers and nurses, children and infants, with one bath and two washstands in the adjoining dressing room between them all, and two porthole windows. Talk of the *clôture* discussions, they were as nothing compared with the wordy war which raged between Mrs. Major Bosbury, who occupied the top berth facing one of the windows in question, in company with her two infants, aged one and two years, and Mrs. Neyle's nurse, who slept in the berth underneath the said window, with that lady's little girl. Now, as everyone knows, in a berth well underneath, though close to, an open porthole, you get no air whatever, while in one some distance off the opening, but on a level with it, you are fanned as if with a perpetual punkah. It will be thus at once perceived that the question was a deli-

cate one. Mrs. Major Bosbury got the ship's doctor, who knew nothing whatever about children, to say that the night air of the Mediterranean was harmful to her babes. Mrs. Neyle and her nurse induced the medical officer in charge of the troops to lay down the law that seventeen souls boxed up in a cabin twelve feet by eighteen need some ventilation. The paymaster, like the speaker, had to call everyone to order and to close the discussion. This he did somewhat in favor of Mrs. Neyle's nurse, a very pretty, nice-mannered little girl, by decreeing that the window should remain partially open.

But Mrs. Bosbury had her revenge. Two days later all the ladies instinctively drew their virtuous garments about them, and turned up their moral noses (including little Mrs. Frayle, the grass widow) when they met Mrs. Neyle's nurse on the companion. She was boycotted and sent to Coventry in the nursery. No one would turn on the bath for her, as they came out of it, to save time, or give her a hand with Queenie, who was fractious. At the children's

meals, in the saloon, no one spoke to her, and she and Queenie might have starved but for the redoubled attention of the waiters. Upstairs, on deck, where a space had been netted out for the children to play about in, to keep them from inundating the ship, if the unfortunate domestic sat down on a bench, the other nurses, even soldiers' wives, temporarily acting as such, would get up and leave it. A ship is a perfect hotbed of gossip, people have so little to talk about. Therefore, there was chuckling in the smoking room and in the ladies' cabin, and at that noisy dinner-table, where the jovial second lieutenant reigned, when it was bruited about that Mrs. Bosbury had caught Captain Neyle kissing his pretty nurse on the companion after "lights out," in flagrant defiance of the order hung up there, which enjoins "officers and ladies not to loiter on the companion."

Of course it must be true, all the occupants of the nursery averred, for the delinquent was in the habit of coming to bed so late that she disturbed everybody. None took the trouble to notice that her mistress

seemed to share her predilection for late hours.

Stewards have sharp ears, especially when they are told off to a table so bristling with fun and good stories as the second lieutenant's. Thus it happened that Captain Wilderton, lingering late on deck one night, and pausing to throw away his cigar near the pantry entrance to the saloon, heard a scuffle and a woman's suppressed scream. An amatory steward, who had been pestering Mrs. Neyle's nurse with gastronomic attentions at meals, had lain in wait for her as she went past the pantry to bed, and had endeavored to imitate Captain Neyle's example.

Jack chivalrously interposed to assist beauty in distress. The steward slunk away to the lowermost region in the third deck, where his kind are located. But, to Jack's embarrassment, the pretty nurse burst into tears so hysterical that he could do no more, and, indeed, was loth to do less, than lead her to the stern locker at the end of the saloon, and endeavor to console her. It was very dim there, as only one lamp is allowed in the saloon at night ; yet, before they

had sat many seconds on the locker, and Jack had heard her story amid her sobs, he was gazing into her face with intense surprise. Another few seconds, and he had risen, and was standing before her, his habitual self-possession entirely fled, and was apologizing profusely. She held out her hand in sign of forgiveness, and, at a sound of footsteps coming up from below, hurried off to her cabin. Jack involuntarily lifted his cap to her as she left him.

Six months later, Captain Wilderton was returning from a shooting trip in a remote valley in Cashmere, laden with trophies of his chase. As he debouched with his coolies, tents, and followers, into a little "riant" green valley, from over a mountain pass, he found the white tents of a European encampment already in possession of the ground. A child, whose face seemed familiar, was playing with some servants on the banks of a stream, and, as he approached, two ladies emerged from one of the tents.

There was an instant of mutual amazement, followed by one of recog-

nition. Then the younger lady laughed and held out her hand.

"You remember me, Captain Wilderton—I am Mrs. Neyle's nurse!"

Her companion came forward.

"Captain Wilderton, I can introduce you properly *now*. This is my husband's sister!"

Now there was no game, not even a black partridge, in all that "riant" valley. Yet Wilderton set up his tents alongside the Neyles', and abode with them as long as they remained there. Then, when they marched again, he marched with them, cheerfully sacrificing his sport; and it was only the expiration of his leave that induced him to quit them and Cashmere.

Not long afterward, the English newspapers were full of that sad accident in the Highlands, where Lord Wilderton's eldest son accidentally shot himself, and died on a lonely moor; and the Indian papers announced the appointment, as A. D. C. to the Commander-in-Chief, of Captain Wilderton of the 7th Sharpshooters.

Mrs. Major Bosbury took a house at Simla the ensuing hot weather.

Soon after her arrival, to her intense delight, for she dearly loved associating with the great in the land, she received a big card, inviting her to one of the Commander-in-Chief's dinners. One A. D. C. received her in the hall; another armed her into the drawing-room and presented her to His Excellency. Then a third came forward:

"How do you do, Mrs. Bosbury? Think we've met before—on the *Alligator*. I think you know my wife?"

Mrs. Bosbury found herself confronted by a pretty woman in a smart frock and good diamonds.

"Don't you remember me, Mrs. Bosbury?" she murmured sweetly. "I was Mrs. Neyle's nurse."

The Face in the Fountain.

ONE of the earliest of my childhood's recollections is of old Lady Vantreddert's drawing-room at The Honeysuckles, a little cottage, ornée, in the village of which my father was rector. Everything in the room was of a bygone age, and a faint odor of *pot-pourri* pervaded the air. Over the mantelpiece there hung the sword and the faded sash of the late Sir Henry Vantreddert, while a daguerreotype of the departed general occupied the post of honor on the side-table between a Bombay workbox and a model of the Taj at Agra under a glass case.

Otherwise, all The Honeysuckles was full of momentoes of their only

child—"Dear Harry," as we called him in the village. There were pictures of Harry in long curls, of Harry in petticoats, of Harry in knickerbockers, Harry in sailor suits, Harry in his first uniform. Harry's old hat hung in the tiny hall, his discarded walking-sticks and whips made a brave show on the wall. One would not have been surprised to come across his ulster on a peg, or his umbrella in the umbrella stand. Harry's bedroom was much the same as the day he left it, with old pipes and railway novels, tennis bats and boxing gloves strewn about, just as if he were expected home to-morrow.

Which was very far from being the case. Harry was thousands of miles away, carving out his fortune with his sword in India, as his father had done before him, and his mother's heart had to subsist on the long letters which, I am bound to say, he sent home with most filial regularity. They were nice, frank, cheery letters, with an undercurrent of affection for his mother running unmistakably through them; I often wondered if Harry ever guessed for how large a share of the epistles the village came

in, in the pride of his mother's heart. Perhaps he would not have cared for it very much, had he known.

One day, Indian mail day, we were alarmed at breakfast by a message to my father that Lady Vantreddert begged he would come up as soon as possible, as she very much wished to see him.

"Was her ladyship ill?" my father asked the servant anxiously.

"Not at all," replied the old man. "It's a letter from Master Harry," he added with a smile. Harry was "Master Harry" still at The Honeysuckles, though he was top of the lieutenants now.

"Perhaps, Ethel," said my father, with a meaning smile, "you will run on ahead of me, and tell Lady Vantreddert that I will come directly I have written a letter for the early post."

I ran up, nothing loath—in one's early teens one is delighted to be of importance.

Lady Vantreddert sat up in bed, the familiar, well-covered thin letter spread on the bed before her. She looked rather scared.

"Oh! my dear child!" she ex-

claimed, "I'm so glad to see someone! Something has happened."

She held out a little miniature, one of those miniatures done on ivory by the native artists at Delhi. It was the head of a sweet-looking, fair-haired girl. The artist had certainly caught the coloring and complexion, if the expression was a trifle insipid. I felt relieved as I looked at it. I was afraid something had gone wrong with "dear Harry."

"Who's this, Lady Vantreddert?" I asked.

"It's her — Gerta — pronounced Yerta, he says—mother was a Swede —that's why she's so fair. Oh, dear, dear! to think of it all, a boy like that——"

"Harry a boy, Lady Vantreddert! Why, you told me the other day he was just double my age, and I'm thirteen!"

"Tut! tut! tut! he'll always be a boy to me—my boy—as long as I live, you know. But who would have thought it? But yet I might have expected it—it's but natural, it is!" and she wiped her eyes, till I got frightened again, and asked:

"But Harry's all right, isn't he, Lady Vantreddert?"

"As well and as happy—overflowing with happiness. You shall hear how he writes—what he says about her---about Gerta."

Now, I never was very sentimental, and, at thirteen, not so at all. To this day I remember how bored I became by the reading of "dear Harry's" effusions, honest and warm-hearted though they were, over his lady-love. For his lady-love she of the miniature was.

"'Dear Harry's' all right enough," I remarked scornfully, after I had been relieved by my father, and had gone home; "he's only going to be married, mamma."

The excitement of this portentous news lasted The Honeysuckles some time. Just as it was cooling down other news came, and of a very different type.

It was nothing less than the news of the outbreak of the Indian Mutiny, flashed by the remorseless cable. Father saw the telegram first, and sent mother up to The Honeysuckles to break it to Lady Vantreddert.

Mother remained there all day, and it was a little while before I saw Lady Vantreddert again. All the agonizing telegrams filtered through my parents to the poor anxious mother, round whose one pet lamb, shut up in the fort at Guramghur, a herd of merciless black demons in human form were raging. It was a miserable summer at The Honeysuckles, that of '57. Child as I was, I can remember the gloom which seemed to darken the gay little rose-covered cottage, and which was felt through the whole village.

The news got worse. There was no sign or letter from Harry. We knew Guramghur had been relieved; we had seen his name among those of the garrison who were rescued. He was alive, so why did he not write or telegraph, when he must have known what a state his poor mother must have been in on his account?

At last came a wire, not from him, but about him. It was signed by a surgeon-major at the hospital of some place which we had none of us ever heard of.

"Vantreddert has been ill—is bet-

ter—sails for home in *Shanghai*, September 9."

Words cannot describe Lady Vantreddert's relief and delight. It almost seemed too much for her to hear, after all these months of torture, that her darling was safe; nay, more, that he was returning to her! Unexpected bliss!

"I didn't, of course, say anything to the poor soul to damp her joy, but I think it's odd they send him home if he's better. There's plenty of work to be done yet, hunting down these fiends."

My mother agreed with my father. But no forebodings of any kind crossed Lady Vantreddert's mind. Her boy was better, and was coming home. She could think and talk of nothing else. We watched in the paper the homeward voyage of the *Shanghai*, bearing its precious burden. We allowed so many hours for the passage across the desert (it was before the days of the Suez Canal), and we watched the embarkation of mails and passengers at Alexandria for Southampton. As the vessel became due our excitement was beyond everything. Lady Vantred-

dert was quite too much overcome to be able to think of driving into Barminster to meet her son when we got a wire telling us to expect him. My mother sat with her at The Honeysuckles, and my father drove off in his parsonical wagonette to Barminster Station. I accompanied him, all agog to see "dear Harry," whom I had been too young to remember.

On our way through the village we saw the brass band collecting at the cross-roads to play the conquering hero home; and the old gardener had erected a triumphal arch over the little gate leading into the garden.

"Tall — slim — very active — cheery," I repeated to myself my father's description of the expected one, as I sat on the box of the wagonette, holding the horse, and watched the passengers emerge from the station.

There was no one that fitted the description. Women with children, women with many small parcels, an old man or two, an invalid helped along by an attendant, a few country pumpkins, a few towny-looking clerks—but no one who looked at all

like a smart, long soldier, a returned hero.

I became despairing. My father came out dejected.

"There's some mistake. Harry's not come by this train."

It was most disappointing. We drove home silently. In front of us, some way ahead, a fly dragged its slow course along. We were immensely surprised as we turned the corner, to see it pulling up at the gate of The Honeysuckles.

"It must be he, and we have overlooked him!" cried my father; and he jumped down and ran up to the fly, leaving me to drive after him.

When I reached the gate I saw a man in the fly. He was neither young nor old, neither fair nor grizzled—a little of all. He had a vacant, vague look, and a broad grin on his face.

At the fly-door stood a rather stern-faced, smooth-shaven man, evidently persuading the other to alight.

"I don't want to get out. Let me alone. He! he! he! Oh! don't! You hurt me," and he looked as if he were going to cry.

My father, as pale as death, interposed.

"For God's sake! let him wait a minute, while I go in and prepare them. Ethel," he called back to me, "drive back and stop the band!"

I was glad enough to get away. The grinning, jabbering thing in the fly frightened me.

It did not kill her quite, the poor mother, this dreadful home-coming.

"My boy has come back to me, indeed," she told my mother, with pitiful resignation, after a few days —"come back to me again, like a little child; so it has pleased God!"

Whether it was the fever, or the sunstroke, or the horrors of that siege, something had turned the poor brain, and, apparently, forever. He recognized no one, he did not remember the place, or the house. He seemed to forget everything as fast as it was said, and to be unable to carry on any continuous thought. Yet he was gentle and manageable, and always loving to his poor mother, the only person he seemed to recognize.

"If he had not known me," she sobbed one day to my mother, "it

would have killed me outright. But now I must bear up and live for him, and tend him as long as I am able."

I soon got over my alarm of poor Harry, who seemed to like to be with me. It was like talking to a big-overgrown child.

One day, however, I had a great fright.

Lady Vantreddert had asked me to look for something in her desk in her bedroom. While I was doing so, Harry wandered in, and began watching me in his vague way.

Suddenly I came across the miniature of Gerta I had seen that morning, which seemed so long ago, on Lady Vantreddert's bed.

Harry noticed it too, and for a second or two stood in silence. Then he clasped his head with his hand, as if making some mighty mental effort, and a marvelous change came over his face. His eyes flashed, his breast heaved, and he looked more sane than I had ever seen him.

"Oh! my God! my God! it is she. It is Gerta—my lost Gerta," he cried, passionately pressing the picture to his lips. "Ah! if I knew that she was lost—was dead. She

is lost to me! If I only knew she were at rest! To think those sweet lips—that pretty face—should be the sport—the toy of that incarnate fiend! My God! it is too much——"

He sank exhausted on the bed in a paroxysm of grief.

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Years passed by. I had married and left the village, in the churchyard of which Lady Vantreddert and her poor boy had long been at rest. I had married a soldier, and in the natural course of things found myself with my husband in India. Jim is an enthusiastic sportsman, and likes me to accompany him on his shooting expeditions.

One day, toward the beginning of the hot weather, we drove out many miles from the station where we were then quartered, into a neighboring rajah's territory, intent on shooting antelope.

The potentate in whose domain we found ourselves was hardly a shining light in the way of a ruler or a statesman, but his wide stretches of uncultivated country afforded excellent sport. Moreover, he was exceedingly anxious to be on good

terms with the British, to whose influence he entirely owed his position. His predecessor, that bloodthirsty miscreant who was the prime mover in the seige of Guramghur and the hideous massacre of the ladies and children at Dustypore, had met with his deserts at the avenging hands of Havelock and Outram, and the present Rajah had been enthroned in his stead.

To any British officer shooting in his territory, the Rajah hospitably offered lodging in his summer palace of Bebipore, where he hardly ever lived. So thither, after the manner of Indian travelers, we sent on ahead our food, our cooking pots, our servants, and our bedding, and adjourned there ourselves when the day's sport was over.

Bebipore was a glorious specimen of the highest type of Hindoo architecture. It was built of salmon-colored stone, with richly carved loggia, balconies, and pillared halls. But it was falling fast into ruins. The formally laid-out garden was overgrown and matted, the interior of the palace filthy, and well-nigh given up to owls and flying foxes.

"What a pity to let this lovely place fall into such decay," said I to Jim as we sat on the terrace after dinner, in the rich calm light of a great full moon. "It might be a perfect paradise, you know."

"Ugh! I don't know," muttered Jim, from the depths of a huge folding camp-chair. "There are anything but memories of Paradise connected with it, you know. It was the favorite abode of that brute the late Rajah, who dyed his hands in so much European blood, you remember."

I shuddered, and rose.

"Indeed I do, and it quite takes the glamour off the spot. A serpent in the garden of Eden, indeed! Well, I'll take a little turn before I go to bed. The moon's so bright, I'm not afraid of meeting a real snake."

The only answer was a slight snore from the depths of the camp-chair—Jim had had a heavy day after the black buck.

If the moonlight was unearthly bright, as only tropical moonlight can be, the shadows it cast were of inky blackness, I strolled along the straight paths, between a tangle of

orange and pomegranate trees, matted together with masses of creepers. In the center of the grounds I came on one of those oblong artificial ponds or tanks so dear to the native taste. It was surrounded by a low masonry parapet, and from each corner jets of water were intended to spout from the brickwork. But the whole thing was in ruins, and as silent as the grave, lying like a huge mirror, a dazzling spot among the surrounding dark shrubberies.

I paused a few seconds, and gazed into the shining depths.

The night was still save for the whirring of the crickets in the trees and the occasional unearthly yell of a jackal in the distance. Not the faintest breeze ruffled the surface of the tank, which was so placid that I could distinctly see myself as I leant over the edge.

Suddenly I gave a start.

Someone else was looking too. Over my shoulder there was another face reflected—and oh, what a face! I see it now sometimes in a nightmare.

It was the face of a native—swarthy, beetle-browed, keen-eyed,

gazing from beneath a white turban with a cunning malignity that froze the marrow in my bones.

With a cry of horror, I turned round to see who was there.

There was no one.

The path was deserted and silent. Not even a rustle in the bushes broke on the night air, or betrayed a disappearing form. I looked round wildly for a moment, and then I fled, as fast as I could run, back to the palace, and into my room, and, not stopping till I had made fast the door, sank breathless on to the bed where Jim lay snoring peacefully.

I had a hideous night, haunted by blood-curdling dreams of that awful face, which I somehow associated with the wicked Rajah of evil memory, the late inhabitant of the place. I can assure you I was not sorry to find myself driving back into cantonments next morning.

I had not told Jim of my fright. He had been asleep during the first flush of my excitement, and when I thought the matter over in broad daylight, and in a calmer mood, I was dreadfully afraid he would chaff me about it; for Jim has no imagi-

nation, and absolutely no belief in the supernatural.

However, I felt very sorry I had not risked the chaff when, some weeks later, Jim proposed another expedition to Bebipore. It was too late now, however, and I could only put as cheerful a face on the matter as possible, promising myself that no power on earth should induce me to wander near that fearful tank again.

But I had counted without my host, however. I kept within doors all the evening, quaking secretly in my shoes, and fearing to see that face looking out upon me from every dark nook of the pillared hall or the lofty chambers. I took care that Jim should not leave me for a second, and I think, on the whole, I played my part bravely, for he never suspected how nervous I was.

But, on the morrow, as we sat having our early tea on the terrace before setting out shooting, there was a hue and cry among the servants for Nip, my little terrier, who was missing.

"Go and call down in the garden, Ethel," suggested Jim.

I was torn asunder between fear

of losing Nip and dread of revisiting that horrible tank.

"You come with me, Jim," I replied. "You—you—you can whistle so much louder than I can."

Jim strolled off, cigar in mouth, and I followed.

Of course he went straight down to the tank, and then—oh, horror!—seated himself on the edge of the parapet and began quite unconcernedly to call Nip.

I couldn't call; my voice would have failed me, different though the scene was in daylight. The water, for instance, looked quite deep and dark, and yet it was evidently shallower than it had been at our last visit, for there had been no rain and the country was drying up fast.

I noticed this as I leant over the edge, saying to myself that the vision of that night must have been all fancy. Yet my hand was trembling so as I tried to fasten my brooch, which had come undone, that the latter slipped from my grasp and splashed into the water, making me start.

"Oh, Jim!" I cried, "my

mother's brooch, with baby's hair in it! I must find it!"

I had forgotten all my terror now in real grief, for that little yellow lock inside the brooch was all that was left to me of the little form which for a few short months had gladdened our Indian home.

"We'll get it directly," said Jim, all alacrity, and thrusting in his stick. "There's not a foot of water in the tank. Never knew such a dry season. Go and call some of the gardeners; we'll make them search, and I'll stand here to mark the spot."

Anxious as I was to get my brooch back, I was not sorry to keep away from the dreaded spot, so sat expectant on the terrace.

Presently our bearer came running. He put my little treasure safe, but muddy, into my hand and then hurried away again in the direction of the tank. Some time elapsed and Jim did not appear. What could he be doing?

At last I descried him coming up the walk, followed by a crowd of natives, servants, gardeners, hangers-on. Evidently something had happened, for Jim looked grave.

"Very rum thing," he said, sitting down by me on the terrace. "What do you think we found when looking for your brooch? A skeleton—a woman's skeleton, I think—lying in the mud. This ring was on the third finger of the left hand——"

He was interrupted by the headman in charge of the place, who made his way through the crowd, followed by a toothless old crone, and flung himself at our feet.

"May it please your Highness, the defender of the poor, this, the grandmother of the gardener, knows all. She says the bones are those of the beautiful white lady with hair like gold, whom the late Rajah (whom may the devils destroy!)brought here alive after he had killed all the other white ladies at Dustypore. He loved her much, the Rajah. She was to have been his favorite wife; but this old woman, who had charge of her, slept heavily one night, and the Miss Sahib had gone when she awoke. No one ever saw her again. But the old grandmother says that was the ring she wore."

Jim and I looked at each other.

It was a dark tale, but it sounded true.

I twiddled the ring in my fingers.

"It looks of English make," said Jim.

"There is something written on it," said I, peering intently, and rubbing the dirt off.

Then, suddenly, a memory came back of the long ago days of my childhood in the old village at home, of old Lady Vantreddert, and of her "dear Harry."

For on the ring I read: "From Harry to Gerta!"

The Hunting of the Major.

"THE SAHIB" was the best polo pony I ever had, and he was cursed with the most fiendish temper it has ever been my ill-luck to come across in four-footed beast. His very appearance was satanic; I have his portrait before me now, drawn in water colors, by one "Mummoo, painter," as he signs his production---a white turbaned Hindoo, who made the round of the European stables of the station, painting likenesses of favorite steeds for a few rupees apiece. Mummoo certainly had a clever knack in drawing horse flesh, though hardly so successful with the human form divine, as was to be seen when he attempted to mount the noble owner upon some

pet quadruped. "The Sahib," however, stands alone in his glory, for, in good earnest, no one, except his own particular groom, cared to approach him in his stable. Mummoo has drawn him standing on what is intended to be the yellow-brown grass of the country, with which we bed down horses in India. But vegetation was not Mummoo's *forte*. A polo-ball and stick lie on the bedding and the background is the gray-washed wall of the stable, with a square-paned window in the center. This Mummoo probably copied from some picture in an English sporting paper, such as he was very fond of getting hold of, for no impecunious sub, such as I was when I owned "the Sahib," ever boasted a stable in India as grand as that. A rude row of mud huts, thatched with grass, divided by low mud walls into stalls, with a rough log as a barrier before each and a grass screen to keep the sun out, such is the average Indian stable, though quite good enough for even valuable race-horses. Pigs are better lodged in England; but in India the grooms fare worse than the horses.

Mummoo could only draw horses in profile and on the near side. But he had caught "the Sahib's" characteristics to a "T." His clean white legs, with plenty of bone below the knee, his powerful neck and shoulders, piebald, red, and white, his wicked white face and dilated nostrils, his knowing red ears, and his well-ribbed up red back and strong quarters.

In those days we subs of the "Onety-oneth" bestowed more pains on the hogging of our ponies' names than on the cultivation of our own mustaches. In his idle hours, any fellow who was known to be a good hogger was always in request to come round and do so-and-so's new "tat," short for *tattoo*, anglicé pony. We scorned even to leave an "after-dinner curl" or "mounting lock" at the saddle bow (though I cannot say we did not ever need it), and bent lovingly over the little beast's necks, finishing them off with a sharp fine scissors, after the manner of the most experienced *coiffeurs*.

I bought "the Sahib" at Batasar fair. This is a spring gathering in the Northwest provinces, well-

known to all in search of horses and ponies. It takes the form of a vast camp on a plain outside the town, and in the motley throng which, all the three days of the fair, crowd up and down the ranks of the tethered horses, high civilian officials jostle wild, unkempt Cabool dealers with treacherous Tartar eyes; remount officers on the buy for troop horses elbow subs after polo ponies; and village zemindars, or head-men, crowd with country-bred *tattoos* for sale. The quadrupeds are quite as diverse as the buyers and sellers. In the long ranks you find horses that have known better days, poor beasts, Arabs or "Walers" cast from the troops, side by side with wild-looking ponies from the frontier or country-breds from the plains. There are lines of camels, too, for sale, either as beasts of burden or for riding purposes, and some elephants; the trumpeting, neighing, squealing, and kicking, and occasional stampeding, pass description.

Though I had marked "the Sahib" for mine own from the first moment my eyes fell on his legs and shoulders, it took me two days to bargain

with the dealer for him. My groom, Mohun, led the pony toward my tent, and I ordered him to be saddled, and thought I would try my new purchase in the cool of the evening.

But I found I was altogether mistaken, for the pony was of quite a different opinion, and, at first, showed himself so much the better fellow of the two, that I christened him "the Sahib," or "the Master," on the spot.

"Your Highness has got a bobbery wallah" (a naughty fellow), remarked Mohun, consolingly, as he hung on to the bridle like grim death, suffering himself to be dragged along in the sand by the pony, while I hopped cautiously alongside, watching for an auspicious moment to throw my leg over him. But that wicked eye, peering at us so satanically out of its corner, that ever-ready hoof, were too much for us; we were compelled to resort to stratagem. One native flung a cloth over "the Sahib's" face, and blindfolded him, while another seized and help up one of his fore-feet. In an instant I was up, and then, "Let go!" and we were off!

No, *I* wasn't, though, hard as "the Sahib" tried to throw me. He had found his master, and from that moment, when once on his back, I never had any trouble with him.

What a pony he was on the polo-ground! I verily believe he loved the game as much as I did. No jibbing or skulking with him, as with some. No having to blindfold him to get him to cross the fateful boundary on to the ground. "The Sahib," stretched out to his top-speed, would follow with his keen eye every turn and stroke of the ball, and twist, and turn, and pull up short, like a pony of half his size and power.

"The Sahib" had great discrimination of character, too, and loved a joke, as you will hear. There was a certain major in the "Onety-oneth," whom we will call Blazeby, a conceited Jack-in-office, exceedingly full of his own dignity. One day, as we were returning to barracks from an adjutant's parade, we beheld Major Blazeby, in full uniform, mounted grandly on his charger, going round the ba acks on some duty. Close to the spot where the parade was dis-

missed, Mohun was waiting with "the Sahib" to carry me back to my bungalow (for in India no one ever dreams of walking a yard if he can help it, and I lived at least a quarter of a mile off). At "the Sahib's" head patiently squatted the groom holding the bridle, when the major and his charger came suddenly round the corner in full view of the whole regiment. The sight raised "the Sahib's" ire. With a kick and a plunge he freed himself from the sleepy groom, and went for the major. He tore up to him, kicking and squealing, and showing his teeth. Then he turned sharp round and kicked at the charger, and then he came on again and bit at the major's legs. The latter tried to drive him off with his cutting-whip; he even beat at him with his scabbard, but "the Sahib" was undaunted. Natives rushed up in every direction and attempted to capture him; but the pony would waltz round and unexpectedly scatter them with a sudden flinging up of his heels.

Then the major turned and fled. But "the Sahib" followed. It was a ludicrous sight—the riderless pony

so small, the major on his big Waler mare so gorgeous. We subs enjoyed it immensely. The major dodged the pony round the barrack building; but size told. The lesser animal could turn the quickest, and came on with a vicious squeal. The major was utterly discomfited. After a narrow escape of his breeches from the pony's teeth, he dismounted hastily and sought shelter in a barrack-room, while the honor of war remained with "the Sahib."

We drank his good health that night at mess, while Blazeby looked daggers at us over his high collar, for we all felt we owed "the Sahib" a debt of gratitude for taking the major down a peg.

That Christmas at Curri-pore.

AS Queenie lay back in an armchair she let the ayah put the shoes and stockings on to her pretty pink feet. Though the shoes were only threes, Queenie was out of the nursery—indeed, nearly out of her teens. But this was in India, where lazy, grown-up people are washed and dressed like babies, and Queenie was pondering other things than dolls.

When her ayah had arrayed her in her neat little dark riding-habit, Queenie took up her whip and gloves, and sauntered through the curtains into the veranda. It was 7 A. M., and though the air was crisp and cool

(there had been the nearest possible approach to a frost between 2 and 4), the sun was shining hotly, and Queenie wore that most hideous of headgears, a pith helmet, which, however, failed to make her look plain. The smoke was rising straight and evil-smelling from the long line of servants' huts in the corner of the compound, betokening the culinary operations for the day's one meal. In the veranda the gardener, meagerly attired in a dirty waist-cloth, was watering Mrs. Moulton's flower-pots, taking especial care of her violets, the most delicate and valuable of her floral possessions. Outside, the garden was a blaze of crimson bougainvilleas climbing up the stems of the mango trees, of roses of all kinds, of climbing alamandas and giant convolvuli. Greedy crows cawed expectantly in the branches above the detached cook-house, and pert little crested hoo-poos hopped about the drive, and cocked their heads to look at Queenie as she stood on the steps.

Down the tree-planted mall, outside the gateless entrance, kicking up the dust which lay thick on either

side the central macadam, came first, a shambling camel, bearing a native cavalry orderly in gay turban, then a flock of gaunt goats, picking up a scant meal of dry leaves and grass. Next, there was a sound of a horse's hoofs. A smart little polo-pony with a hogged mane came cantering up the drive at a hand-gallop, and its rider pulled up in front of the bungalow, and threw the reins to a breathless groom who had flown behind him.

"A merry Christmas to you, Miss Quinlan."

He was a tall, thin man, over thirty, with dark interesting eyes, dressed in a tweed riding suit, and a pitch helmet.

"Don't!" said Queenie. "It's a mockery! It doesn't seem a bit like Christmas!"

"But look at your decorations!" objected her companion, flicking with the end of his cane the festoons of marigolds, hanging by their stalks, with which the servants had adorned the arches of the veranda and made an arch over the gate.

"And we've decorated the church with scarlet poinsettias!" Queenie

pursued. "The whole thing is a sham."

"Not to me," said her companion, looking up at the dainty figure on the steps, "*I* am having a *very* merry Christmas," he added, in a meaning tone, and with a glance of his dark eyes to correspond.

"You are very late this morning," was all Queenie vouchsafed. "The Baby has been waiting ages. Here *idher lao!*" and she beckoned to a groom squatting on the drive, who brought up a pretty little bay Arab, as smart and fresh as paint.

Her companion put her up, and then lingered, perhaps an unnecessary time, settling her little foot in the stirrup.

"I'm *so* sorry," he apologized. "It was not my fault. Ruffleby—he and I share a bungalow, you know—has had a friend turn up by the morning mail, and, as Ruffleby was on duty, I had to take him over to the mess and give him some *chota hazari* [little breakfast]."

Then he jumped on to the polo-pony, and, telling the grooms to wait where they were for them, they passed out through the gate.

Mrs. Moulton, in the intervals of housekeeping, the giving out stores from the store-room in the corner of the veranda, and wrangling with the white-robed cook over his peculations, watched them ride down the mall in the deep dust under the millingtonia trees, which scented the air with their white blossoms.

"It's an awful responsibility having a pretty girl like Queenie Quinlan, so young, so new to India, to stay! But, of course, I'd do anything for Joe's greatest friend—and Arthur Appleton is so gone over her, poor fellow! I wish I knew, I wish I did, what she really thinks about him. Arthur's much too good a fellow to be trifled with."

And Mrs. Moulton turned away to inspect her progeny, just starting for their morning walk—big boy on pony, little girls in panniers on another, little boy in perambulator, and small baby laid out flat on a kind of cushion in his ayah's arms—quite a procession, and each with at least one servant in charge of its tiny self.

Captain Appleton and Miss Quinlan cantered down the mall, meeting many riders and several cortéges of

children, for, being Christmas Day, the Government offices were shut, and the parade-grounds deserted. Queenie was lively as a cricket. A gallop round the racecourse brought a flush of color into her cheeks, of which some months of India had robbed them. But Appleton was rather silent and engrossed.

"You are coming to dine to-night?" he asked, as he took her home again. "We always have the regimental ladies to dine at mess on Christmas Day, and of course you come with Mrs. Moulton.

"Of course!" cried Queenie. "It will be such fun dining at mess!"

In the drawing-room she found Mrs. Moulton engaged in receiving "dollies." In honor of the "Sahib's big day," all the establishment, clad in rustling white garments, advanced to present gifts—flowers, vegetables, groceries, cakes, and sweetmeats—in return for which they received the Indian equivalent of Christmas boxes.

Then they went to breakfast, and, after breakfast, while the Moulton babies shouted and wrangled over their Christmas presents in the back veranda, which represents the day-

nursery in Anglo-Indian households, Queenie heard the sound of "Church Bells" played in the barracks by the band, and knew it was nearly church time.

She put on her best frock, and picked a "Gloire" rose for the front of her dress. The gaunt barn of the station church was but a quarter of a mile off, but, like everyone else, she and Mrs. Moulton drove thither. Under the great portico they waited to greet their acquaintance, and to watch the troops march up, the band playing and the pipers at their head.

The men passed in, but the officers waited without in knot still the last moment. Queenie found Captain Appleton close behind her, greeting her with a grave salute.

The church was gay with evergreens and poinsettias; the punkahs had disappeared for a few brief weeks. The band formed the choir, and sang and played lustily. The lofty bare building rang again with the familiar strains of "Hark! the herald," till the voices drowned the brass instruments. All sorts of people were in church, who never went there as a rule, because it was Christmas Day. Not

only the officers on duty, who were obliged, but civilian officials who know no ecclesiastical laws, and, far down by the doorway, a knot of Eurasian shopkeepers and clerks, desirous of keeping up their British nationality.

At intervals through the sermon Queenie looked at Appleton's clear-cut profile as he sat in one of the front seats with the other officers, but her reflections over him were not complimentary.

"He's grown very grave and dull down here, at Curripore! He was ever so much jollier in the hills last season. Yet I know he got Mrs. Moulton to ask me to stay with her while papa was away in camp. I wonder what's come to him! He was so jolly at the picnics at Douglasdale, and the boating an the lake!"

She was wrong in one way. Appleton was never what you call jolly. He was always rather a quiet, reserved man, though Miss Quinlan had found him interesting enough to single out from among her many admirers, as her favorite partner at tennis and dances during the last season at Maini Tal. His was a deep, strong

nature, and he was desperately in love. Moreover, just now, he was harassed and tortured with anxiety as to Queenie's real feelings toward him. Her stay at Curripore was drawing to a close. He felt he could bear the uncertainty no longer.

After church, as he walked over to the barrack-room of his company, where the heavy Christmas festivities in the gayly decorated room, both the result of days of preparation on the part of the men, were being inaugurated with much drinking of the captain's health in the liquor he had provided, he came to a decision. As the roof rang with cheers, and they sang, "He's a jolly good fellow!" in his honor, the captain forced rather a sad smile.

"I will ask her to-night," he said to himself; "I will ask her to-night."

Twice the ayah had peeped in through the curtain to see if the "Miss Sahib" was ready to dress for dinner. But Queenie lay still on her bed reading a letter brought by the letter orderly from the evening post. It ran:

"My Own Darling Queenie: I do wish you would write oftener. You don't know how I long for your letters. It seems ages since I bade good-by to you at Bombay—years since that jolly voyage, that so utterly did for me, ended. I sit and stare at your photo, and write to you, to try and comfort myself. And then I get nearly mad when I think how long we have to wait. Nearly a year more. Your father has behaved very cruelly and harshly, I must say. But this is Chistmas—we are on the edge of a new year, which will see us happy—I won't grumble. But, there's a darling, *do* write me a nice long letter, telling me all about your sweet little self."

And so on, and so on. The reader can fill in, *ad libitum*, from his or her private experience of such letters.

A vision rose before Queenie's face of a good-looking, boyish face, with frank eyes of a Saxon blue, and she heard the ring of a merry laugh. She smiled complacently, and then she pouted.

"What a bother men are! Always so impatient! I'm sure I'm in no hurry to be married. Lionel's a dear, darling boy, and I love him

awfully, but—I'm having a very good time."

And she called the ayah to come and dress her in her white tulle frock, and to get her a fresh "Gloire" to put in her golden coils of hair.

Outside the bungalow shared by Captain Appleton and Lieutenant Ruffleby, the sporting character of the regiment, was waiting, about 7.45 P. M., a venerable gray arab, that had once been somebody's charger, held by a groom armed with a lantern. Ruffleby and Appleton stood in the veranda in mess dress, the latter impatient.

"What an age the fellow is! The first bugle went ever so long ago! I don't want to be late."

"I daresay you don't," replied Ruffleby—who loved horses, and never spoke to a lady, if he could help it—with a wicked look. "And I don't want to get cold soup!"

"What on earth's he doing?" asked Appleton.

"Writing a letter to his wife to catch the home mail! That's what comes of having made an ass of yourself in the matrimonial line at such an early age, and——"

"Having two babies down with the measles!" interrupted Ruffleby's guest, with a cheery laugh, as he emerged from the bungalow. "Awfully sorry, my dear fellows!"

"Get up on 'the omnibus,' old man," cried Ruffleby, wherewith they all three mounted the ancient quadruped who rejoiced in that *sobriquet* and shambled off to the mess, the groom running before with a lantern, whereby all three saved the polish on their mess boots.

Of course, Appleton had arranged matters. Major Spanks took in Miss Quinlan, for there were, of course, only ladies enough for just the senior officers. But she found Captain Appleton sitting on her other side. Queenie was very gay, and he had a good time. Major Spanks, a man of discernment, who had once been young, devoted himself with much attention to his dinner, criticising the specially-fattened turkey, and the khausamah's efforts in plum-pudding and mince-meat, and the mess-president's taste in tinned sausages, asparagus, and such delights. The Major and the Colonel sat in the middle of the long table,

the few ladies near them. At each end was a sea of mess-jackets, but the two sides were almost hidden frem each other by a long line of mess-plate, trophies of racing and promotion.

At length the cloth was removed, and the dark mahogany, an heirloom of the corps, stood revealed in all its swarthy beauty, glistening with plate; there was a moment's pause :

"Mr. Vice, the Queen," said the mess-president at one end, standing up and nodding to the vice president at the other.

Everyone filled their glasses and drank :

"The Queen—God bless her !"

And then the talking was resumed, and the time for crackers had come.

Pop !—pop ! The long voyage had affected Mr. Tom Smith's productions in some cases, and they missed fire. Queenie pulled a good many with several different people—for was she not the guest of the evening, they told her ! But Appleton had his share.

"This was quite true, quite true—believe me," he hazarded, after reading the motto which fell from the

last they had exploded. "Will you keep it as a little remembrance of this Christmas," he added, with a very pleading look.

"Sweetest eyes were ever seen,
They belong to you, my queen."

She blushed, and laughed.

"What nonsense!"

But all the same she stuck it in the glove which she was buttoning, for the ladies had risen to depart.

When Appleton with the others rejoined them in the anteroom, he spied Queenie, who, weary of looking at stale English papers and listening to station gossip, was sitting on a low chair in the dim veranda. He drew another to her side and sat down.

The moon had risen—a great Indian moon—shining with a marvelous clearness, and casting inky shadows. Across from the barracks came faint snatches of songs, as if Christmas revelry was still going on, broken now and again by the hour struck on the guard-room gong, or the challenge of the sentry. Inside, the room was crowded, whist parties were settling down to play, and

there came a click of balls from the billiard-room. Queenie idly watched the people talking.

But Appleton's head bent lower and lower over the little white figure in the chair. He hardly knew how he began, or what he said; but he found himself pleading with a passion that Queenie could not stop.

Suddenly, however, her face grew quite white; she caught her breath, and laid her hand on his arm. A figure had come and sat down in a chair opposite the window, taking up a newspaper. It was Ruffleby's guest.

"Lionel! here!" gasped Queenie. "And you never told me!"

Appleton followed her eyes, bewildered.

"Lionel," he echoed. "Who's Lionel?"

"My Lionel!" she said faintly. "Lionel Banks."

He looked at her utterly puzzled. He knew Banks was the name of the visitor.

"Your Lionel?" he repeated.

"Yes, of course; we're engaged, you know!"

She did not even look at him

(though he staggered as if he had received a blow, and clutched the door-post for support), but rose and advanced eagerly into the room.

But within two paces of the stranger, who had laid down his paper and risen, she stopped short.

"I—I beg your pardon! I have made a mistake!"

"Not at all," said Ruffleby's guest. "I asked who you were, so may I introduce myself as Lionel's twin-brother, of whom he has probably told you. I know all about your little affair, and you have my best wishes."

She grasped his hand warmly. Then she turned her head to look for Captain Appleton, whom she had left in the doorway.

But at Banks's last words the latter had vanished, and was seen no more that night.

It was Christmas Day again, a year after. But all our actors have left Curripore. The regiment, after a long march, have arrived at Guramabad. But it is by no means so cheerful a Christmas they are spending there. For Arthur Appleton, the best fellow in the corps, everyone's

friend, despite his quiet, grave ways, lies dying.

A sickly hot weather, with no leave to the hills (he would not take any), and the long march have told upon him. Typhoid fever, that fiend of India, had set in, weary, fluctuating, but ever sapping away at the strength. The doctor shakes his head, and gives little hope from the first. "He has no heart in him to pull through," is his verdict.

The prayer for the sick has been read, amid a hush, in the middle of the bright Christmas Day morning service. There were tears in hard eyes and lumps in strong men's throats in B company barrack-room at the Christmas dinner, when the subaltern proposed, as usual, the captain's health. The cheers died away on the lips with a sigh. The toast is drunk in silence, but from the hearts of all there.

At the officer's mess a gloom hangs over the dinner. Major Spanks has sat up many a night with Appleton, and little Ruffleby has stayed away from the Bulamabad race meeting, where he was to ride in the Cup. The fellows talk low, and with an

evident effort, for the doctor has said Appleton will not last through the night.

He lies apparently unconscious, on his little camp-bed, which they have drawn near the window to catch the cool air. The moonlight is flooding the veranda and casting unearthly shadows in the compound. The world is very still. Only the occasional bark of a prowling pariah, or the distant yell of a jackal, breaks the stillness.

Suddenly the sick man moves. His dark eyes open, looking strangely large. His lips move. Ruffleby, sitting by the bedside, bends eagerly over him.

"What's to-day?" asks Appleby feebly.

"Christmas Day, old man," replied Ruffleby, in an unsteady voice.

A wistful look comes into the dark eyes.

"Ah!—last Christmas Day—at Curripore," he murmurs.

They were his last words. His eyes close, and, by the morning's dawn, he is dead.

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Mr. and Mrs. Lionel Banks are

honeymooning in that favorite resort of newly married couples, the great Akbar's deserted City of Victory, near Agra. They have taken up their quarters in that exquisite little pavilion of carved pink stone and marble which the passion of a magnificent monarch built for his Christian wife, and which alone in all the ruined city is still fit for habitation. They have been out shooting black buck all day, on the plains around. Now they sit on camp-chairs in the pretty pillared veranda, resting.

"By Jove!" suddenly exclaims Lionel Banks, removing his cigar for a moment. "I never thought of it, Queenie — it's Christmas Day!"

Queenie does not answer. Her eyes are gazing somewhat thoughtfully out into the quiet moonlight.

Lionel leans over the back of her chair, and kisses her pretty hair and forehead.

"You are very silent, little wife?"

Was she, too, thinking of last Christmas at Curripore?



Such a Suspicion.

ONE of the things which surprise the new arrival in India most is the prevalence of camp-life, and the luxury of its conditions. For this, the climate is answerable. Certainly to me, not many weeks out from "home," our existence under canvas during the great Durbar of 187– seemed like a chapter out of some Eastern story.

Everyone who was in the shiny East at the time will remember that Durbar. It was no ordinary progress of a civilian commissioner through his district, or a visit of a governor, with his canvas village, to the outskirts of some great city of his province. It was not a purely business-like camp for great military maneuvers,

comprising acres of soldiers' lines, of picketed horses, and of parked guns. No, the Durbar of Pugreepur was merely a pleasure performance. The great Panjandrum himself, with his satellites, the Supreme Government, was there, his huge reception-tents the center of the canvas city, to which miles of white canvas street converged.

There were governors galore, commissioners, agents, and rajahs' bear-leaders innumerable, and soldiers of every sort and hue, in a bewildering kaleidoscope of uniforms. But what most impressed my unaccustomed eyes was the camps of the native princes—such a mixture of wealth and shabbiness, of dirt and diamonds, of gold-laced uniforms and pink-dyed tails of horses, of elephants and camels, of weirdly-braying bands, squalid tag-rag and bobtail, of perpetual squabbles for precedence, and of contentions as to the exact number of guns they were entitled to in the way of salutes.

Put the whole picture into a glittering, glaring setting of cloudless blue sky overhead, and of white dust

below, and you will have some idea what the Pugreepur Durbar was like that January.

The days were devoted to endless receptions, to races and reviews ; the nights, to solemn official dinners and balls. There did not seem to be a moment's breathing time. But we girls enjoyed ourselves hugely.

And who were we ?

We both owned, as mutual uncle, Mr. Woodhouse, B. C. S., Commissioner of the Bundelabad district of the East-by-West Provinces—that is to say, he was my uncle, and his wife Ida's aunt. I had come out to spend the six months' cold weather with the Woodhouses, and Ida, who had been left an orphan about a year before, had lived with them ever since. My uncle had come to the Durbar in the train of his Governor, him of the East-by-West Provinces, and our tents were next to the gubernatorial ones in the long street of the camp of the East-by-West officials.

In front, opening on to a hastily improvised little flower bed of pots and shrubs, planted in the sand with much effectiveness in a land where turf is not, was the mess tent, where

we entertained at every meal, when we were not being entertained ourselves. Behind that came the drawing-room tent, crowded with chintz-covered wicker-work settees and easy-chairs. The red-and-yellow striped linings of the tents gave a most becoming "dim religious light" to the interiors, which was very acceptable after the glare without. Of course the walls were devoid of ornament, and the doorway somewhat low. Otherwise, to such a perfection is camp-life carried in this land of perpetual picnic, that it is almost impossible to tell that you were not in ordinary and luxuriously furnished apartments. Behind, again, came two adjoining sleeping tents and bath rooms—one occupied by our uncle and aunt, the other by us girls. These opened into a little yard surrounded by canvas walls, where the servants came and went, and performed their culinary mysteries.

The time was 8 A. M. We girls, who had been out for a morning canter round the race course, were lounging in our riding-habits in easy-chairs, after the discussion of the 7:30

"little breakfast." Our aunt, in a *peignoir*, sat at her writing table, having just dismissed Kodar Bocus, the caterer, after inspecting his accounts and the *menu* for the day.

Ida Macmorres, a handsome Irish girl, lay languidly back in her chair, holding before her in one hand a man's visiting card, and with the other striking at flies upon the sofa with her riding whip. Her fair brow was somewhat ruffled, and she did not look particularly amiable.

"Aunt Jane," she began again, after a pause, taking up the conversation where it had dropped a few minutes before.

"Five, ten, thirteen, fourteen, twenty—dear me, *what* a lot of eggs Kodar Bocus does charge for!" murmured Aunt Jane from the writing table.

"Aunt Jane," repeated Ida, imperiously (she could be very imperious when she chose), "am I to understand you that I am to 'cut' him then?"

She waved the pasteboard toward us. I knew quite well the inscription it bore: "Captain Arthur Blantyre, 30th Bengal Cuirassiers.

"My dear child," remonstrated Aunt Jane, looking worried, "twenty, twenty-five—twenty-five chittaks of butter. Good gracious! Yes, my dear child, your uncle, you know——"

"By 'cutting,' I mean not to bow, not to speak, not to dance. I merely inquire for guidance during the next six months, till my twenty-first birthday," went on Ida icily.

"O Ida!" remonstrated Aunt Jane, ready to cry, "you are the most unfeeling——"

"And what are you and my uncle, I should like to know?" retorted the girl fiercely, dropping down on a fly dexterously with the lash of her riding-whip.

"You know it's for your good. Oh, don't go on!"

"You didn't think of my good in the hills this year," Ida continued bitterly. "We might ride, and dance, and boat, and picnic, at Nynee Tal as much as ever we liked together. And then, when we got back to uncle, and Arthur writes—you turn round upon me!"

"My dear child! your uncle *must* know best." And Aunt Jane tried to go back to her work. "Kodar

Bocus is just ruining me! I must compare books with Mrs. de Ferret. Dear Ida, do drop the subject; it is closed. Girls, go and take your habits off; it's getting near breakfast time, and I've so many notes to write. Eleven—fourteen—and two make—" And so on, while Ida stalked off angrily to her tent, and I sought out my uncle in his office tent.

As usual he was surrounded with papers and red-uniformed *chuppras-sees*. But he never would allow I was in the way, and now he looked up at me with a smile. "Uncle," I began, with the freedom of a privileged person, "what's all the row about? What does Captain Blantyre do?"

"What doesn't he do?" returned my uncle wearily. "I'm sick of him and the subject. If your poor aunt ever saw farther than the end of her nose, she would never have thrown the reins on Ida's back as she did this summer in the hills, and make the job harder for me now."

"But what is there against him, uncle—except that he's awfully good-looking, and dances deliciously, and rides splendidly, and——"

"Plays hard and high, is deeply

dipped in the banks, hadn't a penny to bless himself originally, and lives on other people's now, is not above riding a horse in a race to suit his own pocket, and—do you want any more reasons?"

"Oh, uncle!"

"And to conclude, that, as I am Ida's guardian, and as she will come into a hundred a year of her own when she's of age, I most devoutly wish the 30th Bengal Cuirassiers and Captain Arthur Blantyre had not been ordered to the Pugreepur Durbar!"

When I returned to our sleeping-tent I found Miss Ida in anything but an engaging frame of mind. As I watched her scolding the patient ayah who was brushing her hair, I could not help wondering if, had Captain Blantyre been able to see her at that moment, he would have admired her as much as he professed to do. But then she was a girl who had had all her own way in life very much hitherto, though now, between the weak aunt, the stern, matter-of-fact guardian, and a pertinacious and undesirable lover, she seemed to be faring badly.

We had scant time, however, for any further discussion or reflection. To the 10:30 breakfast dropped in two or three intimates. No sooner was the meal concluded than calling-time began, and we girls had to help our aunt receive a seemingly endless stream of callers, paying the stiffest and shortest official visits. Then came a formal lunch, or "tiffin," at two o'clock, beginning with soup and ending with dessert, to which people armed each other in as to a dinner party. By the time the "after-tiffin" coffee and cigarettes were discussed, the landau with the gray country-breds, pheasants' feathers at their ears, and with two grooms, armed with yaks' tails as fly switches, standing on the board behind, rumbled up to take us for our afternoon drive. To-day the attraction was a polo match, on a ground which had been improvised near the native city, and where we found everyone, from H. E. downward, watching, amid clouds of dust, the scurrying ponies of the 30th Bengal Cuirassiers *versus* the Crimson Lancers (British). Captain Blantyre, playing for his regiment, and the captain of the polo

team, was in brilliant form. Murmurs of admiration over his splendid rushes and neat hits rang out from all around, and Ida's eyes flashed proudly, and she looked very handsome and triumphant as she watched the slim, well-knit figure in the red-and-white striped jersey.

But, when the game was over, and the players, after refreshing themselves at the peg-table, sauntered around to greet their acquaintances, cautious Aunt Jane peremptorily ordered her coachman to turn off the ground, and we took an unexciting drive round the civil lines and past the cemetery. Ida bit her lip and looked very sulky.

There was one of the biggest balls of the Durbar on that night. But, first, we all went to a very dull and stately dinner at the Military Member of Council's, the War Minister, as it were, of the Viceroy's cabinet, an old friend of Uncle Woodhouse's. I recollect how handsome Ida looked, in yellow tulle, as we girls went in, ready dressed, to my aunt's tent before starting.

Aunt Jane was rather late; she generally was the most unpunctual

of mortals, though Uncle Woodhouse tried to circumvent her, when they were at home in their bungalow, by keeping the clocks all half an hour fast. She was very flurried now, hastily pinning on her diamond ornaments, while the ayah, with the usual perspicacity of her kind, kept bringing her gloves with no buttons and the wrong fan.

But she found time to cast a critical eye over us girls.

"Yes, you'll do, Ida. Most becoming, that yellow! Mollie"—to me—"can't you settle those flowers more smartly? Oh! ayah, quick, I don't think I've got all my diamonds on. One—two—three—four; I never quite can remember how many there ought to be."

For Aunt Jane was dressed in all her glory—a blue velvet gown, Europe made, of three seasons ago London style, her *pièce de résistance*, and she wore all her diamonds. Now, Aunt Jane's diamonds were famous throughout the East-by-West Provinces, and would have been noticed even in a London drawing-room. They were part of her late father General Rice Curry's loot from the

sack of the Maharajah's palace at Cumberbund, in the first Sikh war. She was literally blazing now that we had bedecked her podgy little person with the brooches and necklaces.

"Gracious, aunt," I exclaimed, "I should be afraid of being robbed and murdered in my sleep if I were you! So easy for a 'slithering' native to creep in under the *kanaut* [canvas side of the tent]."

But then Uncle Woodhouse was heard raving that we were late for dinner, and we all hurried out, and thought no more about the diamonds.

After the dinner-party, uncle went home and to bed, but Aunt Jane took us girls to the Viceroy's ball. It was the most brilliant scene I had ever beheld—such a mass of superb, full-dress uniforms, and, in corners, begemmed Rajahs, with diamond aigrettes in their turbans worth millions, looking stoically on at our strange mania for dancing.

Ida looked very handsome, and was much sought after. But Aunt Jane kept a lynx eye upon her, and saw that she did not dance with the objectionable Captain Blantyre,

at least till supper-time. But when that great moment came, always a solemn one in an Indian official ball, Aunt Jane was too engrossed in seeing that she got her rightful precedence, to think of anything else.

I was sitting out one of the supper dances in a very dim, small tent, pitched in the Viceroy's garden inclosure for the guests, when the night air struck me as chilly, and my partner went off to the cloak-room to fetch my cloak. I was left sitting alone in a dark corner. To me enter, without perceiving my presence, another couple, who evidently, to judge by the following conversation, imagined the spot unoccupied.

She: "I am directly disobeying them in even speaking to you. But I do not care—another six months!"

He (in a low tone): "Six months—oh! my poor girl, you don't know—it will be too late!"

She: "Too late! What do you mean?"

He: "That I'm in a devil of a mess—done for—ruined!"

She: "O Arthur!"

He: "The last three nights' poker

at the — Hussars' mess; then 'True Blue' losing by a head. Ida, I'm ruined, dishonored!"

She: "Dishonored, Arthur?"

He: "I mean it. My troop-money is deficient: it will be found out in two days, and I can't lay my hands on a farthing; not a *shroff* (money lender) will look at me. But I won't face it; my mind's made up—we must say good-by forever; there's but one way for me out of it all——"

She (wildly): "Arthur! Arthur! don't talk like that! Something must, shall be done! I——"

He: "My poor child, what can you do? Even if you had power over your own poor little money, it would not go far enough."

She (excitedly, after a moment's pause): "But how much would—what would tide you over—a few thousand rupees?"

He: "They *would* tide me over, could I get them. But, darling, what's the use of deluding ourselves with vain——"

They were suddenly interrupted by the entrance of my partner with the cloak, and left me filled with dis-

may, for they were my cousin Ida and Captain Blantyre.

I didn't enjoy the rest of the ball a bit, I felt so unhappy and uneasy, and was delighted when Aunt Jane, who was very sleepy, took us back to our tents.

The excitement had tired me out, and I hurried into bed and soon fell fast asleep. Only once I was half aroused. A figure was crossing the tent. I jumped up, alarmed, but saw it was only Ida in her dressing-gown, and with her hair down.

"Go to sleep, Mollie," she said; "I've got such a headache that I have been to get a whiff of air."

When I awoke again it was broad daylight. Ida's bed was empty, but by mine stood the ayah, wringing her hands.

"Oh! Miss Sahib, something dreadful—other miss gone ride; Mem Sahib still sleep—snore; but, oh! in night dreadful thief come—all Mem Sahib's di'monds gone. Oh! poor ayah; ayah be beaten." And she began to howl.

I was up in a moment. Instantly my remark of the night before, when

my aunt was putting on her jewels, flashed into my mind. I stole into her room. There she lay, snoring peacefully, but her jewel-case upon the dressing table was empty ; every one of the little velvet receptacles which contained the priceless brooches and pendants—vanished!

"Chokedar [watchman] he sleep—Miss Sahib, Mem Sahib—all sleep. Thief he come very, very gentle—so—" (and the ayah pointed to the aperture between the tent and the ground). "No one see!" And she beat her breast.

I stared bewildered at the place she pointed at, when a slight rustle behind the curtain which separated the tent from the next caught my ear. I looked up and saw Ida's face peeping through—a face so white that my heart stood still ; for I suddenly remembered how I had seen it bending over me in the night.

In a moment there came back to me the dreadful conversation I had overheard at the ball, and the most horrible suspicions flooded my mind.

Without a word I crept back to my bed, thankful that Ida remained in the veranda of her tent, where I

could hear her (one hears everything under canvas) having *chota hazari* with our uncle, the clatter of the tea-cups, the bearer coming in with the English letters (it was mail morning), and my uncle's comments over the new *Times*.

But suddenly, amid it all, I heard the clatter of horse's hoofs, a sudden stoppage in front of our tents, and a familiar voice, strong, firm, and cheerful:

"Mr. Woodhouse, I am Captain Blantyre, of whom you have heard. I know you have forbidden me your house, and to speak to your ward; but I have just received by the mail unexpected intelligence, which places me in a position entitling me to ask you to give her to me. My uncle in Scotland, Sir Alexander Blantyre, has suddenly lost his two sons—drowned, bathing. I am his heir, and he wishes me to leave the service at once, and come and live near him and look after his property. May I take Ida with me?"

"Oh, the villain! The consummate liar! The plot they have hatched!" I said to myself with a groan.

Then Aunt Jane, awakened by the noise, called me hurriedly.

"Mollie," she cried, "the ayah's gone mad; she says my diamonds are stolen!"

"Indeed, my poor aunt," I said gently, "every case has been clean swept off."

"Rubbish!" said Aunt Jane. "I was too tired to put them away last night. See here!"

And, hopping out of bed, she snatched up her best lace cap, which lay on the dressing table.

Beneath it reposed the diamonds, intact.

The police found the velvet cases a few days later in the bazaar, sold by a dismissed servant.

Ida and Captain Blantyre were married at the close of the Durbar, and went home directly. But I have never kept up Sir Arthur and Lady Blantyre's acquaintance.

THE END.

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